NATURE & CULTURE

HAMILTON WRIGHT MABIE

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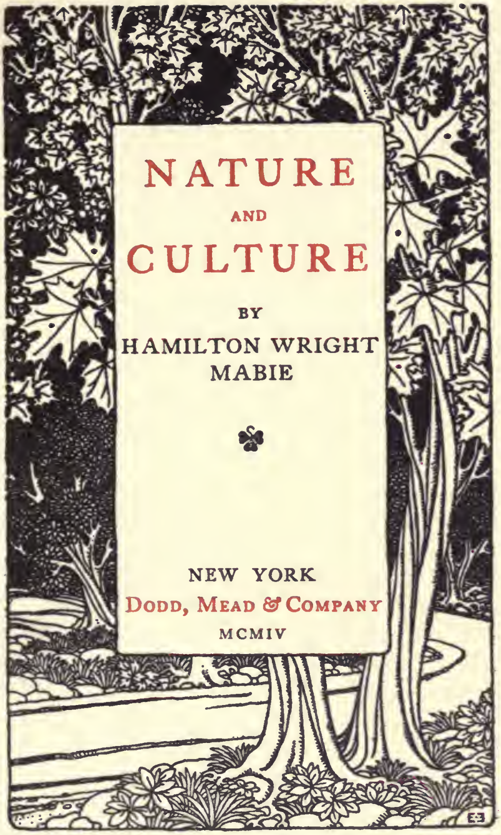

NATURE
AND
CULTURE

BY
HAMILTON WRIGHT
MABIE

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TO

JOHN BURROUGHS

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I

The Art of Arts

THE supreme art, to which all the arts rightly understood and used minister, is the art of living. At all times and in all places the materials of art are present; but the men who can discern the possible uses of these materials, and who possess the instinct and the training to put them to these uses, are always few in number and often widely separated in time. The material out of which art is made is everywhere; but the artist appears only at intervals. In like manner, the mysterious force which we call life is put into every man's hand; but the men who discern its highest and finest possibilities, who get out of it the richest growth, and who put into it the noblest personal energy, are few in number. The great majority use life as the artisan uses his material; a very small minority use it in the spirit and with the power of the artist. The artisan is often sincere, diligent, and fairly skilful; but he is imitative, conventional, and devoid of creative power. The artist, on the other hand, is free, individual, constructive; he sees the higher possibilities of the material which he commands, and the most delicate uses of the tools which he employs; he discerns new meanings, evokes unsuspected powers, reveals fresh feeling, and gives the familiar and the commonplace a touch of immortality by recombining or reforming it in a creative spirit.

The art of living is the supreme art because it presents the widest range of material, and the most varied, delicate, and enduring forms of activity. Sculpture, painting, music, architecture, literature, taken together, are an expression of the human spirit realizing itself and its surroundings in the language of beauty; morality is the attempt of the same spirit to discern and live in right relations to other human spirits; religion, its endeavor to establish and sustain fellowship with the Divine Spirit; philosophy, its effort to discover that final generalization which shall put that spirit in command of the order of the universe; and history, the record of the struggle of that spirit to achieve self-consciousness and self-mastery. For the real history of man is to be found in his creative works, — in Homer rather than in Thucydides; in the "Divine Comedy" rather than in Villari, in Shakspeare's plays rather than in the works of Hume and Green. Whatever view of the authority of the Old Testament one may take, it is certain that in the noble literature which goes under that title there is a deeper, clearer, and fuller disclosure of the human spirit in its effort to realize itself and live its life than in all the historical works that have been written. For the real history of man on this earth is not the record of the deeds he has performed with his hands, the journeys he has made with his feet, the material things he has fashioned with his mind, but the record of his thoughts, feelings, inspirations, aspirations, and experience. It is the story of his spirit which is significant; and the account of the things he has made and done is of value chiefly as these material products illustrate his spiritual activity and development. The beautiful line on the Greek vase is of far higher value than acres of crumbling brick or stone in the valleys of Asia, because the Greek was so much more the master of his materials, and, therefore, so much more the artist than his contemporary in the farther East.

The story of Athens, comparatively weak and poor, is dearer to our hearts than the story of the rich and powerful Phœnician towns, because it represents and embodies so much more intellect and soul.

In a very deep sense poetry is truer than the chronicles, and the great epics tell us far more of the character and life of the races which produced them than the most trustworthy histories.

Mythology, once relegated to nurseries or drawn upon for entertainment in the chimney corner, has become one of the most important contributions to the history of man, not because it has kept the record of fact, but because it registers a profoundly interesting stage of spiritual development. Although unhistorical as a chronicle of fact, it is eminently historical as a report of the dawning of great truths on the minds of primitive men.

The interest in the human story centres, therefore, not on what man has done at any particular time, but

on what he has been; not on the work of his hands, but on the discoveries of his spirit. It is not as a mere doer of deeds that he appears in the long record of history, but as a mysterious and many-sided spirit, striving to attain self-knowledge and self-development. If he were a mere doer of deeds, — a fighter, builder, colonizer, — his story would read like one of those old chronicles put together by faithful, plodding souls in the earlier periods of almost every modern literature, and which remain enduring examples of dry, literal, inartistic fidelity; but man is something more than a doer of deeds, and the story of his life on earth, instead of being a dreary chronicle of unrelated events, is a marvellous drama of thought, feeling, and action. It is a Shakspearian tragedy rather than a mediæval chronicle; and the protagonist in the great world play, on which the curtain is always rising and falling, is the human spirit striving to understand and master itself, and to understand and master its surroundings by knowledge, by obedience, and by the forth-putting of the creative power.

In this struggle for self-realization a few men become artists: they learn the possibilities of the materials with which they deal; they put themselves into fruitful relations with the things which can nourish and the forces which can inspire them; and they put forth the creative energy that is in them freely and continuously. They discover the educational quality of experience, the sustaining and teaching power of Nature, the cumulative force of training; and they work out their lives with intelligence, foresight, and resolute adjustment to the best conditions. They are not more prosperous than other men, so far as external fortunes are concerned ; but they are greater, nobler, and more masterful. Their supremacy lies in the fact that they are artists in the management and uses of life ; they are fresh in feeling, true in insight, creative in spirit, productive in activity. They live deeply and they produce greatly. Such a man, despite all faults, was Goethe ; a man who discovered in youth that life ought not to be a succession of happenings, a matter of outward fortunes, but a cumulative inward growth and a cumulative power of productivity.

II

Education

EVERY art has its own methods of training, its distinctive discipline, its secrets of experience and skill; and mastery depends upon practice of these methods, submission to this discipline, possession of the fruits of this experience, and command of this skill. Between the untrained man and the artist, in every department of creative work, there must be an educational process more or less severe and prolonged. This necessity is imposed on men of genius no less rigorously than on men of talent, and the exceptions will be found, on closer scrutiny, to be apparent rather than real. In music, it is true, there have been boys of marvellous gifts, whose skill antedated all systematic training; but even in such cases as that of Mendelssohn the early promise was late fulfilled in mature performance mainly because thorough training steadied, supplemented, and developed a natural aptitude. In cases which are more to the point for the present purpose, — in such a case, for instance, as that of Burns, who wrote exquisite lyrics without any formal education for such delicate and difficult work, — the exclusion of a person from the operation of the law is apparent rather than real, and is explained by the very inadequate sense in which the word education is commonly used.

For it is constantly assumed that

education is a formal process, following well-defined lines and carried on by academic methods; while, as a matter of fact, education is as individual as temperament and gift, and may take as many forms. A sound education is not a specific kind of training; it is the training which qualifies pre-eminently for a specific kind of work. Artists especially need and employ the widest latitude of choice in the selection of educational material and methods; and, in the end, every genuine artist is self-educated. He has discovered, in other words, the methods which help him most efficiently to master the difficulties of his art and to command its secrets of skill. If the story of a gifted boy like Burns is read with insight, it will be found that he prepared himself for his work by an education not the less definite and effective because it was wholly individual, personal, and unacademic. Burns discovered very early the hours, the places, the experiences, the moods which enriched and inspired him, and having discovered them he pursued and possessed them. This was his education ; and it was as genuine and thorough for its purpose as that which Milton found at Cambridge, and, later, in his Italian travels, or as that which his great successor, Tennyson, secured for himself two centuries after within the ivy-covered walls of the same venerable university.

Lincoln's style is a constant marvel to those who have not studied his habits and career for the purpose of discovering his educational processes; for such pieces of prose as the second Inaugural Address and the Gettysburg Address were never written or spoken without thorough and long-continued training. To those, however, who have made such a study, there is no mystery about Lincoln's command of lucid, flexible, and beautiful English. If, as a boy, he had definitely thought out a method of training in the use of language, he could hardly have improved upon the simple expedients, the life-long habits, and the wonderful opportunities of practice which he employed or which came to him. No deep, great, productive quality or power comes to a man by accident; for, while the capacity for developing such a quality or power must be inborn, its unfolding depends not only on skill, but also upon character; upon a general ripening of the nature, as well as upon the gaining of many kinds of dexterity. In the case of every man who uses such a power in a great and fruitful way, or develops such a quality on a noble and commanding scale, there is some adequate kind of education; for mastery comes only after obedience, service, and knowledge; and greatness always waits upon life.

These truths have special significance where they are applied to the supreme art, the art of living. For this most difficult and comprehensive of all the arts rests upon laws as definite and certain in their operation as the laws which underlie music, literature, sculpture, painting, or architecture; and no man can master this highest art without learning the nature of these laws and living by them. In order to secure from one's surroundings the most vital and enriching influence and power, and to give out the purest and most productive personal energy over the longest possible time, one must submit to the most severe and prolonged education. The greater the achievement, the more stern and long-sustained the training which prepares for it; and since no achievement is so great as a rich, noble, and productive life, nothing exacts such heroic toil and patience as a preliminary condition. In the splendor of such a work as the "Divine Comedy" it is easy to forget the relentless bitterness of experience which deepened the poet's nature to the capacity of a vision of suffering and of redemption at once so appalling and so sublime.

The path to such an achievement led, as the women of Verona declared, through the fires of hell. Looking at a career like Goethe's, so steadily productive, so varied in its interests, so wide in its activities, so commanding in its influence, one too easily overlooks the immense and tireless toil of a life which was without haste but which was also without rest.

The process by which one becomes an artist in the unfolding and use of his life is the process of self-culture ; of conscious effort towards the attainment of a clearly perceived end; of deliberate selection of some influences and interests and deliberate rejection of others; of intelligent and sustained toil. In the pursuit of this highest art, as in the pursuit of the lesser arts, mastery never comes by nature or by chance; it comes always as the result of self-culture long and intelligently sustained and followed.

In the common use of the word *culture*, as in that of the word *education*, there is an element of narrowness and untruth which must be eliminated before its true and rich meaning can be appropriated. For culture, instead of being an artificial or superficial accomplishment, is the natural and inevitable process by which a man comes into possession of his own nature and into real and fruitful relations with the world about him. It is never a taking on from without of some grace or skill or knowledge; it is always an unfolding from within into some new power; the flowering of some quality hitherto dormant; the absorp-

tion of some knowledge hitherto unappropriated. The essence of culture is not possession of information as one possesses an estate, but absorption of knowledge into one's nature, so that it becomes bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. It means the enrichment and expansion of the personality by the taking into ourselves of all that can nourish us from without. Its distinctive characteristic is not extent, but quality of knowledge; not range, but vitality of knowledge; not scope of activity, but depth of life. It is, in a word, the process by which a man takes the world into his nature and is fed, sustained, and enlarged by natural, simple, deep relations and fellowship with the whole order of things of which he is part.

III

Time and Tide

ONE of the most perfect repartees ever made was that which came from that master wit, Alexandre Dumas, when, in answer to the question, " How do you grow old so gracefully ? " he replied : " Madam, I give all my time to it." The finer qualities and the higher achievements involve this element of time. They demand labor, they impose discipline ; but they depend, in the end, not upon toil or obedience, but upon a slow ripening. The man of culture is a man of ripe nature, — sound, sweet, mature. The crudity of haste, of exaggeration, of unformed taste, of servility to the fact, of deference to lower standards has gone out of him; and in its place has come that slow, sure, complete maturing which resembles nothing so closely as the ripening of a fruit; that final expression of the life of the tree, to which all its forces converge and in which its vitality bears a perfect product. The process by which a man absorbs the world into himself, so that it enriches and liberates him, is a vital and not a mechanical process; and because it is vital it requires time, and is fulfilled by the long-continued and largely unconscious process of growth.

Nothing brings into such clear relief the prevalent misconception of the meaning of culture as its identification with diligence of acquisition or with studied pursuit of the graces and accomplishments of the intellectual life, instead of its identification with a process of growth patiently pursued for a life-time and as deeply rooted in the order of things as the growth of an oak. For genuine culture is not a cult or a fad, and does not create a select class separated from their fellows by superior delicacy of taste and greater refinement of habit; it is the freeing of a man from the limitations of his temperament and conditions; first, by the expansion of his nature by a vital knowledge of himself and the world, and next by bringing his spirit and methods into such harmony with the laws of life that his activity touches the highest point of intelligence, variety, and energy. Culture does not issue in a type reproduced in all its votaries, but in a more distinct and powerful personality.

The master of the art of living must understand clearly the nature and the possibilities of the materials with which he deals before he can recombine or reform them with plastic freedom, or with the inspiring ease of the creative energy. To know the world and himself, therefore, is the first task of the artist in life; and this knowledge comes to him as the result of culture. It is a knowledge so deep, so rich, and so vital that it cannot be secured by any mechanical or purely intellectual process; it involves the action of the whole nature; of the imagination, the emotions, the reason, the will. It is not a knowledge of things, but of life: to secure it is not an exercise of memory, but a putting forth of the soul. It is not to be had by conning text-books, although these have their uses; it is to be had by living relationship with the thing one studies. The master in any department is not he who has its facts at his fingers' ends, but he who commands its inward power and has the secrets of its perfection in his heart. There is, perhaps, no deeper distinction between men than that which exists in the quality and kind of their knowledge of their surroundings. For some men see nothing but the shell of things, others constantly discern the soul; to some everything is common, to others all things are uncommon. Shakspeare did not see a different world from that which his contemporaries looked upon; he saw the same world with a clearer vision. That which to them seemed common and without significance, to him was full of meaning and shone or darkened with fate. He stood in vital relationship to his time and his fellows; his contemporaries stood in merely formal relationship with them.

There is nothing which comes to a man comparable in interest, richness, and beauty with this gradual absorption of the power and the knowledge of the world about him into himself by culture; by holding mind, heart, and soul open year after year to the influences that stream in, to the knowledge constantly proffered, to the exhaustless vitality which floods the world, and free access to which is just as much a privilege as the right to breathe the air or see the sky. The man who sets out to ripen his nature by contact with literature, for instance, must prepare himself for a long, arduous, and inspiring task. For he must not only familiarize himself with an immense number of literary works, but there must be in him a slow but ceaseless growth, constantly bringing him into closer contact with the men he studies; until, at last, he stands on their plane, sees the world with their eyes, and so masters their secret. So far as comprehension is concerned he stands on a level with them. But no one gains Dante's level without sharing in a measure Dante's experience. The intellectual equipment may be secured in a comparatively brief period, but the vital equipment comes only with the ripening years. It is idle to study Dante unless one lives up to and into his experience. There is, therefore, something in every art from which the immature student is absolutely shut out. No ardor of work can compass it, and no fervor of devotion snatch it before the predestined hour; time, and time alone, brings it within reach of the eager hand. The man must ripen before he can possess the highest and the best. There is no toil more arduous than that of a life of aspiration; but there is no toil which so soon becomes play by that transformation which makes the task done by intention the free and joyful outflow of one's native energy and force.

We are slow to recognize and swift to disregard this necessity of growth in addition to that of work; but in every life expansion must supplement activity. We must lie fallow before we can produce greatly, and we must enrich ourselves inwardly before we can spend generously in creative work. The length of the process varies with the natural richness and openness of the individual nature; but no man, however gifted, escapes the process. The gradual ripening of Shakspeare is one of the most impressive facts in that spiritual biography which is written in his plays; the youth who wrote "Romeo and Juliet" could not have written "The Tempest." The ripening of years, rich in vital fellowship with life and men and nature, separates the ardent fancy of the earlier from the mature and splendid imagination of the later work. "Between Shakspeare in his cradle," says Mr. Higginson, "and Shakspeare in 'Hamlet' there was needed but an interval of time;"

but that period of ripening and expansion was as necessary to the writing of "Hamlet" as was the genius of the poet. To know the world vitally and creatively one must know it not only with the mind but with the soul; one must live with it year by year, and slowly ripen as it yields that fruit of knowledge which grows only on the tree of life.

IV

Man and Nature

THE material of culture is as wide and various as life itself; and to the man who puts himself in right relations with his fellows and the world nothing is devoid of educational quality. It is one of the characteristics of true culture that it not only adds steadily to one's knowledge, but as steadily develops the capacity for acquiring knowledge, and the instinct for discovering in every person, relation, event, and experience something of permanent value as a means of enrichment. And this process goes on until the great stream of life, as it sweeps past and eddies about the individual mind, becomes a true Pactolian river, bringing its wealth from a thousand sources and draining a world-wide experience for the enlargement of each open soul. When a man has established such a relation with the order which surrounds him that every contact with that order disciplines, informs, and broadens him, he has come into harmony with the purpose which that order is working out, and has raised himself above the changes of external fortune and the happenings of the material life.

Among the most important of these ministers to culture — religion, art, literature, science, human relations, activity, and experience — Nature holds a first place. For Nature antedates all the arts and sciences, and was involved in those earliest experiences which attended the maintenance of the individual life before any social relations were possible. The intimacy between man and Nature began with the birth of man on the earth, and becomes each century more intelligent and far-reaching. To Nature, therefore, we turn as to the oldest and most influential teacher of our race; from one point of view once our task-master, now our servant; from another point of view, our constant friend, instructor, and inspirer. The very intimacy of this relation robs it of a certain mystery and richness which it would have for all minds if it were the reward of the few instead of being the privilege of the many. To the few it is, in every age, full of wonder and beauty; to the many it is a

matter of course. The heavens shine for all, but they have a changing splendor to those only who see in every midnight sky a majesty of creative energy and resource which no repetition of the spectacle can dim. If, as has often been said, the stars shone but once in a thousand years, men would gaze, awe-struck and worshipful, on a vision which is not less but more wonderful because it shines nightly above the whole earth. In like manner and for the same reason, we become indifferent to that delicately beautiful or sublimely impressive sky scenery which the clouds form and reform, compose and dissipate, a thousand times on a summer day. The mystery, the terror and the music of the sea; the secret and subduing charm of the woods, so full of healing for the spent mind or the restless spirit; the majesty of the hills, holding in their recesses the secrets of light and atmosphere; the infinite variety of landscape, never imitative or repetitious, but always appealing to the imagination with some fresh and unsuspected loveliness; — who feels the full power of these marvellous resources for the enrichment of life, or takes from them all the health, delight, and enrichment they have to bestow?

It is a great moment in a man's experience when he awakes to the wonder of the world about him, and begins to see it with his own eyes, and to feel afresh its subtle and penetrating charm. From that moment the familiar earth and sky become miracles once more, and his spirit is hourly recreated in their presence.

There have been stern and heroic men to whom the beauty of the world has seemed to be a matter of indifference; but such an indifference always involves a permanent and serious loss of breadth, knowledge, vision, and power. A man may get to his journey's end by the light of a lantern, but he is less secure than the man who travels by daylight; and he loses the landscape. In the last analysis it will be found that the training and development of the human mind have depended so largely upon Nature that no man can be said to have really compassed life or comprehended his own being who has failed to come into conscious relations with this greatest of teachers. It is certainly true that the exaggeration, the hardness, the limitation, the morbidness of so much mediæval thought, and of the scholastic philosophy and theology which were its products, were due in large measure to the attempt to understand man isolated from his surroundings and to interpret his life apart from Nature. There is good reason to believe that man issued out of Nature by a long process of development; it is certain that Nature mingled with his dawning life, and not only sustained but unfolded that life; and it is also certain that in body, mind, and soul man's life is so involved to-day with the life of Nature that the two are inseparable, and cannot be understood apart from each other.

Man is incomprehensible without Nature, and Nature is incomprehensible apart from man. For the delicate loveliness of the flower is as much in the human eye as in its own fragile petals, and the splendor of the heavens as much in the imagination that kindles at the touch of their glory as in the shining of countless worlds. Nature would be incomprehensible without her interpreter, — whose senses supplement her own wonderful being; whose imagination travels to the far-off boundaries of her activity; whose thought masters and demonstrates her order; whose skill utilizes her forces; and whose patient intelligence brought to bear century after century on her vast and all-embracing life, has not, it is true, uncovered the source of her vitality, but has gone far to discern its methods of manifestation. Man, on the other hand, cannot comprehend a single chapter of his history without appealing to Nature; cannot trace a single developed faculty back to its rudimentary stage without finding Nature present at every step in that evolution and largely directing it; cannot retrace the course of any skill, art, industry, trade, or occupation without coming upon Nature at every turn. The story of his slow rise from barbarism to civilization is very largely the story of his contact with Nature; and when he turns to his inward life and studies the religions, sciences, and arts by which he lives and expresses himself and his energy, he finds Nature everywhere present as the chief influence, the constant companion, or the authoritative and commanding teacher.

This slow education of the race at the foot of Nature is not the only training to which men have been subdued, but it has been so constant, so gradual, so intimate, that by a true process of absorption man has become a part of Nature and Nature a part of man. They have lived together so many thousands of years, and in such substantial unity, that they are no longer separable. They are bound together in the great order or movement of the universe; the inexorable obedience of Nature to the law of her being has become character in her companion and pupil; the beauty of her landscape is reproduced in his arts; the changes of her seasons, which constantly set his life in a new framework, are recorded in his poetry; the majesty, mystery, and order of her manifold life underlie his religions; her products and forces sustain his life, spread the roof over his head, furnish the materials for all his fabrics, and turn the wheels which transform them into things of beauty and of use. All that man is and has done, has depended largely upon his relationship with the sublime power which kindled the stars above the cradle of his infancy, and, now in his maturity, makes him master of forces which are lifting him above drudgery and making him poet, artist, and creator.

V

The Race Memory

WHEN one strives to realize through the imagination what this intercourse between Nature and the race has been, and how much each individual owes to it, there rises in the heart not only a sense of awe and wonder, but a deep feeling of intimacy and tenderness. Through a thousand forgotten channels each life has been nourished and expanded by a ministry which, beginning with the first man, is still untiring; serving the welfare of the race, this ministry has still its special and peculiar teaching and fellowship for every member of that race. This unbroken association of man with the world about him gives unity and cumulative meaning to history, and unites us to the earliest times and the primitive men. We carry in our own natures the record of every sort of contact with Nature, and of every stage of the evolution of the soul. Nothing in the way of experience is wholly novel to us, because at some period in our race-life we shared in it; and in the depths below consciousness there is something which responds to the appeal of the happening which is new to the individual, but which is old to the race because it is part of that race memory to which all men have access.

Born in cities and bred amid their stir and activity, we adapt ourselves swiftly to the habits of the mountaineer, of the traveller in the desert, or the seafarer. Nothing is really strange to us, and a brief period makes us at home in all conditions. Nothing that comes to a man is wholly unexpected, because it has already happened to men whose blood is in his veins; no aspect of Nature is entirely unfamiliar, because at some time, in the history of some ancestor, we have touched Nature at every point and seen every phase of her manifold life. By virtue of our race relationship we have all been dwellers in huts; woodsmen skilled in the secrets of wood-craft; we have lived in virgin forests; we have been at home in tents on great plains or burning deserts; we have been sailors, explorers, fighters, colonizers. Nothing comes amiss to us, but everything awakens some response in us; and nothing entirely unfamiliar happens because everything has already happened. The American, making his first voyage, finds himself quickly adopting the habits, the mood, the language of the sea, because, centuries ago, he crossed the same sea, and in still earlier centuries his sail flitted by many a coast and was spread on many strange waters. In England he finds himself constantly striving to recall the vague and indistinct but very real background of his old-time life. Holland, Scandinavia, and Italy have surprises for him ; but the things that are novel seem to have come about since his last visit rather than to be the strange manners of hitherto unknown countries.

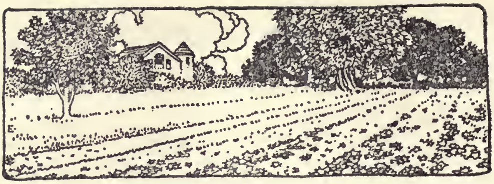
Egypt, Syria, and the farthest East make him realize the long periods of time which separate him from his earlier knowledge of them. After a day of sight-seeing and a night of sleep, nothing is really strange; it is a fresh reading of an old story. Travel becomes, therefore, not so much an exploration as a revival of recollection; a stirring of the memory.

In like manner, no record of experience appeals to us in vain; there is always something in common between our own history and the most marvellous things that happen to other men and women. Children do not become accustomed to the variations of the fairy tale more readily than their elders to all the possible vicissitudes of life. We divine the deeper meaning of the myth because we once made myths; we enter into the rush and unspent vitality of the national epic because our lives once passed through the stage which produced the epic as naturally as the soil produces the plant and the tree; the lyric, in all its keys and tones, sings to us as if it were but the vibration of our own souls, because every deep and passionate feeling which throbs in its soft or tumultuous music has at some time stirred within us; the drama, in all its vast range, has no tragedy so sombre, no fate so dark, no incident so terrible, that in some past we may not match it with a kindred experience; and fiction, searching so far and so patiently for the fresh fact, the novel condition, the unreported circumstance, is never able to surprise us beyond the passing moment. We have lived too long, travelled too widely, seen, felt, and done too much to be really taken unaware by any contemporary happening or invention. The race has lived through all experiences, and the

life of the race is in the very fibre of our life; it is part of our substance: we are, in large measure, what it has made us. Below our conscious life abides the life of the race; and our natures, in their hidden recesses, reverberate with the echoes of the entire past.

A very large part of this universal life of humanity has been concerned with Nature; and a very great part of those experiences which have made humanity what it is have come to men through their association with Nature. Whichever way we turn, therefore, when we attempt to retrace the steps by which we have come to our present condition, we are brought face to face with Nature; and there dawns upon us slowly something approaching an adequate impression of what this vague and indistinct but intensely real and overwhelmingly influential intimacy means, and how much is involved in it that is of the highest importance to us. When we look back and attempt to distinguish and enumerate the rills of knowledge, discipline, and power that have fed us, our lives seem like endless rivers, rising far back in the uplands of myth and tradition, and receiving, as they flow onward, tributaries from every mountain spring or meadow brook no less than from every sky that has stretched over them in their long course. There is a striking passage in one of the purest and freshest of modern love stories — Arthur Hugh Clough's "Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich" — which brings before the thought the range and sweep of a human life so far as its sources of influence and power are concerned: —

" But a revulsion wrought in the brain and bosom of Elspie;
And the passion she just had compared to the vehement ocean,
Urging in high spring-tide its masterful way through the mountains,
Forcing and flooding the silvery stream, as it runs from the inland;
That great power withdrawn, receding here and passive,
Felt she in myriad springs, her sources far in the mountains,
Stirring, collecting, rising, upheaving, forth-out-flowing,
Taking and joining, right welcome, that delicate rill in the valley,
Filling it, making it strong, and still descending, seeking,
With a blind forefeeling descending ever, and seeking,
With a delicious forefeeling, the great still sea before it;
There deep into it, far, to carry, and lose in its bosom,
Waters that still from their sources exhaustless are fain to be added."



VI

The Discovery to the Senses

THE education imparted by contact with Nature is so inclusive, so deep, and so vital that from this point of view Nature seems to exist for the development of man. It is impossible to study the effect of human contact with the material, the forces, or the aspects of the world about us without perceiving the most striking results of every such contact on the minds, the hearts, and the souls. The old fable of Antæus gets a new meaning when we begin to grasp the enormous accession of intelligence, power, and character which has come to humanity as a result of intercourse with Nature. So marvellous are the adaptations of our surroundings to our educational needs that one cannot read far in the intellectual history of the race without recognizing the educational significance of life and the marvellous school in which that training is imparted to successive generations by methods of which those who learn are for the most part entirely unconscious. As a "middle term between man and God" Nature seems to furnish both the material and the methods necessary to the unfolding of the soul, and silently but imperatively to open man's life to the creative impulses and influences.

This education, collective and cumulative in its rich results, is, of course, individual and personal in its processes. The immense deposit of knowledge, insight, discipline, and character which the race now holds as the result of an unbroken contact with Nature kept up through many centuries, was acquired and accumulated by individual experience and training. It is impossible, even in the dawning light which research has thrown upon primitive habits, manners, and ideas, to reconstruct the primitive educational processes. But in this field, as in so many others, a child must be our teacher; and from the observation of the children about us we may learn many things about the thoughts and ways of those earliest men and women who were cast upon Nature as helpless and dependent as the child on its mother's breast. Whatever may have been the manner of their coming to the perfect human condition, it is safe to assume that their unfolding was as gradual as that of children; that it proceeded by slow stages from the lower to the higher, and was a matter of growth rather than a matter of acquirement. If it be true, as seems probable, that the complete man rose out of Nature by a long process of evolution instead of being created above her, how marvellously close must have been the relationship between man and Nature through countless centuries! She is then in very truth, as the poets have held, our mother; and all our desires for her, all the stirrings of the imagination when we hear the murmurs of the deep woods or catch, far inland, the compelling tones of the sea, gain a deeper and more mysterious significance.

But whatever the story of those forgotten centuries may be, it is clear that the first education men received from Nature was that which came through the first great human experience; the discovery of the world in its relations, human need, and activity. The first men must have learned at the beginning that some actions were safe and others perilous; that some things were good for food and others deadly; that there were times, seasons, and an orderly progression; that the body must be fed, sheltered, and clothed, and that the materials of food, clothing, and housing existed on every side; that fruits were for eating, grass for cutting, and trees for building. The biography of the physical life may have been slowly or rapidly written, but it must have been written in terms of observation.

Nature taught men, first of all, to see things, and then to make use of them. In this great school, observation must have been the first lesson set for the learning of the earliest classes. The senses must have been developed and trained first; the eye was taught to see, the ear to hear, the tongue to taste, the hands to feel, to shape, and to mould. So through a slowly broadened intelligence, which may only be hinted at here, men learned to see what was about them and to use it for their needs. All educational processes are in a sense contemporaneous, and it is impossible to educate the eye or the hand without educating the mind at the same time; but in the earliest training the emphasis must have been upon observation, and observation served as the first and most available means of awakening the sleeping, or developing the germinal soul of man.

The discovery of the world to the senses, earliest of all the discoveries of Nature in point of time, is still incomplete, and is now the special function of science. If its progress could be separated from the general development of the race and written in a separate record, it would reveal a minute and unbroken training of all the senses of all men according to their ability and teachableness. That training is as much a part of the individual education of to-day as in the first years when men and Nature came in contact; but it is no longer directed, as a rule, to the mere preservation of existence; it has become a higher education and more distinctly realized resource. Nature is still ceaselessly observed and studied for

food, shelter, clothing, and material support; but science watches and meditates not for bread and raiment, but for some new phenomena which may disclose the existence of a finer or subtler force, or hint at the operation of an unsuspected law. And it is an impressive evidence of the educational quality inherent in Nature that the more thoroughly the mind masters the facts of her manifold life by appropriating the training of observation, the more subtle and pervasive become her forces; so subtle and pervasive that they seem more akin to the spiritual than to the material. As men advance in educational development, the educational materials and methods offered by Nature take on forms in harmony with the expanding intelligence. For Nature grows more marvellous as man learns more about her life, and meets each new out-reaching of intelligence with the stimulus and inspiration of new vistas and outlooks.

As she trained the earliest, so she trains the latest man who is willing to become a student in this great school. About every man's feet there lies this wonderland of force, life, law, and beauty which has ministered so mysteriously and so vitally to the unfolding life of his race; and that wonderland is open to every one who is willing to give the eye and the mind the training of observation. In the order of growth it is written that each man must discover the world for himself; he enters into the heritage of knowledge which humanity has slowly and painfully accumulated; but if he would educate himself, he too must discover with his own eyes the world about him. To the beginner, as to the man whose sight has been suddenly restored, the world conveys a great, confused mass of impressions; but patient and persistent observation resolves this mass into a wonderful order, steadily widening, and constantly disclosing a richer and more inclusive beauty. The boy, in heedless pursuit of his sport, notices the existence of the fern; the naturalist knows that there are hundreds of varieties of this plant, and they differ from each other, for the most part, only in a fairy-like rivalry of delicacy and beauty. To the untrained eye and ear the roadside is a mass of tangled shrubs; to the trained eye it is a walk in that wild garden which one comes to love at last as he loves no bit of cultivated soil however ordered and kept. To the untrained ear the forest is pervaded by a confused murmur; to the trained ear that murmur becomes a harmony of many clearly marked tones. The world steadily widens and grows in wonder and mystery to the man who forms the habit of observation; it becomes at last not only an intimate friend, but a constant source of surprise and delight, — a new and inexhaustible resource. The cockney sees nothing in Nature; Thoreau saw so much that he had no time for anything else.

VII

The Discovery to the Imagination

ONE of the most striking and oppressive interpretations of Nature in modern literature is that to which Tourguenieff has given the form of a prose-poem. The great writer imagines himself in a vast cavern, which is filled by the presence of a majestic womanly figure sunk in profound thought.

"I soon guessed that this woman must be Nature herself; and a reverential fear, like a sudden shiver, penetrated my soul.

"I approached her, and greeting her respectfully, I cried: 'O Mother of us all! on what are you meditating? Are you perhaps thinking of the future fate of mankind, or of the long road that man must travel in order to reach the greatest possible perfection, the highest happiness?'

"The woman slowly turned her dark terrible eyes, her lips moved, and with a thundering metallic voice she spoke: —

"'I am considering how to give greater strength to the muscles in a flea's leg, so that it may escape more easily from its enemies. The equilibrium between attack and defence is lost, and must be restored.'

"'What?' stammered I. 'Is that what you are thinking about? Are not we men then your dearest, favorite children?'

"The woman frowned slightly, and said: 'All creatures are my children ; I care equally for you all, — and annihilate all without distinction.'

"'But virtue — reason — justice?' I stammered again.

"'Those are human words,' resounded the brazen voice. 'I recognize no good or bad; reason is no law for me; and what is justice? I gave you life; I take it from you and I give it to others, — worms or men, it is all the same to me . . . . but as for thee, protect thyself for a while, and leave me in peace.'

"I strove to answer, but the earth groaned and trembled, and I awoke."[1]

Studied apart from the educational progress of humanity, Nature may appear impassive, indifferent, sublimely inexorable; but studied in connection with the unfolding of the winds have become his aids; he masters the greater forces, and they, too, become his ministers: so that his voice travels vast distances, his thought flies to the ends of the earth, he makes the whole world one great community, he lays upon Nature the tasks which once crushed him, and he becomes a man in soul as well as in body. He has learned his lesson, and emancipated himself from physical servitude by obedience, by observation, and by patience, skill, and character.

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[1] Poems in Prose; Boston: Cupples, Upham & Co.

This is the story of his relations to Nature on the material side; and all this sublime education has its roots in the earliest observation, trained, broadened, and turned into thought. But with this education of the senses, resulting in the mastery of physical forces, there has gone on another education, bringing men into spiritual relations with Nature and bearing the fruit of a ripening and unfolding of the soul. This deep and beautiful relationship is suggested by Aubrey de Vere, in a passage of memorable beauty. Speaking of Wordsworth, he says: "How much the human mind conferred upon Nature, and how much Nature conferred upon the human mind, he did not affect to determine; but to each its function came from God, and life below was one long mystic colloquy between the twin-born forms, whispering together of immortality."

The observation of the primitive man, like that of the child of to-day, did not end in the simple act of seeing; it slowly gathered the facts which carried with them the inference of law; it awoke the imaginasoul of man, she appears everywhere sternly beneficent, austerely friendly; for our friends are not those who flatter and pamper us, but those who, to recall Emerson's phrase, "make us do what we can." From the beginning Nature has held men steadily to their tasks; has compelled them to learn or to suffer, to observe or to perish.

Primitive man was the slave of Nature by reason of his ignorance. One of the earliest representations of man now in existence portrays him fleeing, defenceless, naked, and panic stricken, from a great serpent; he is without weapons, refuge, or device. He is at the mercy of the weather, the sun, the malarial mist, the frost, the wild beast; he has neither house, arrow, plough, vessel, nor medicine. But he has the capacity for growth, and all the possibilities of power are in him. He observes, reflects, reasons; and he slowly emancipates himself from his slavery to material conditions. He begins to see that his taskmaster is his teacher, and that his hardships and tasks are lessons which accomplish his liberation. He shelters himself from the weather by using the trees whose shadows once terrified him; he kindles on his rude hearth the same fire which burns in the relentless sun; he snatches clothing from the beasts which threatened him; he makes weapons and tools; he draws about him groups of animals and gives them domestic habits and tastes; he breaks the sod and Nature feeds him with grain; he builds ships and finds the mysterious and awful sea easier to traverse than the land, now that the tion, and religion, poetry, and art were born. It was impossible to see the world long without discerning order and sequence; day followed night, and night, in turn, was succeeded by day; one season gave place to another, but always in a fixed order; seed time carried with it the certain assurance of the harvest time; a mysterious but certain regularity brought the stars to the zenith, the tides to the beach, the leaves to the trees. Slowly the great idea of law took shape, and the chief value of phenomena was no longer found in themselves but in their illustration of the fixed and marvellous order of which they were part. Phenomena, at first so novel and perplexing, became significant of the forces behind them, and the vast material framework of the universe was soon to be the

product of incalculable forces, which played through it, and vivified, sustained, and moved it on its mysterious way.

The discovery of the world to the senses was supplemented by the discovery of the world to the imagination, and the education of men at the breast of Nature passed into another stage and took on a higher aspect. For the imagination is the faculty which sees behind the material phenomena the force which moves it, the law which governs it, and the spiritual fact which it symbolizes. When the imagination awoke, men began to look at the world no longer as a mass of detached impressions, a huge agglomeration of matter: they saw it as a whole; they discovered order and law everywhere controlling it; they discerned the tide of vitality which mysteriously ebbed and flowed through it, making it a living organism instead of a ball of inert matter; the great idea of beauty shone from it; its marvellous correspondence with their own lives was revealed; its strange analogy with their own growth, unfolding an inward experience, was disclosed. If the vast process, so briefly outlined, is realized with any degree of clearness, its educational significance and influence cannot be evaded. To see natural phenomena so clearly and so steadily as to discern the law behind them; to study them so intently as to penetrate to the force which flows through them; to rise, by gradual generalizations of widening order, to the sublime and fundamental conception of ultimate unity; to pass beyond this to the secondary and spiritual meaning of the universe; and to perceive how perfectly and completely, in force, phenomena, law, and beauty it reproduces and interprets the life of man; — this is surely the real education of the human race, and in the fulfilling of this function and the working out of this relationship is to be found the key to the story of man's intercourse with Nature; and in the light of this interpretation is to be discerned also the true conception of Nature herself.

VIII

The Poetic Interpretation

THE discovery of the world to the imagination marks the beginning of poetry, art, and religion; for the immediate fruit of that discovery was mythology, and in mythology is to be found the first attempt of men to pass beyond observation to explanation, and to interpret the world about them in terms of their own experience. It was "the earliest form in which the mind of the pagan world discerned the universe and things divine;" it was the sublime vision of the fundamental meaning of material things revealed to the childhood of the race. The physical order, with its variety and beauty, sank deep into the hearts of primitive men, and gradually they began to discern the law behind the phenomena and the truth behind the fact, and to represent these large conceptions in concrete form. The myth, unlike the legend or the popular story told generation after generation for entertainment, represents a serious effort of the mind of the race, and was the product of one of the most significant and important stages of its development. For it marks the second and spiritual contact of men with Nature; the discernment, on their part, that the great order about them embodies and reveals great truths as truly as it discloses incalculable forces; and that, in very deep and wonderful ways, it symbolizes and illustrates their own experience.

The myth, unlike the legend, is an explanation of natural processes and phenomena, or a dramatic representation of the inward or outward experience of the men who fashioned it. The first discovery of Nature was made by the senses, and bore its fruit in all manner of physical and material adjustments; the second discovery was to the imagination, and bore its fruit in general interpretations, in spiritual conceptions, and in poetic stories. Men began to feel the mysterious fellowship between Nature and themselves; and the education effected by that fellowship passed into its secondary stage. The recurring phenomena of day and night began to stir the imagination and to suggest marvellous analogies to human experience. The miracle of the dawn, stealing silently out of the bosom of the night; the splendor of noonday, with its contests between sun and cloud; the dip of the sun behind the western hills; the splendor of the afterglow, slowly fading into darkness; — these constant phenomena of the world's life sank deep into the consciousness of the childhood of the race, and the imagination responded with a rich growth of poetic stories, in which these phenomena of the visible world were not only explained, but were made to symbolize the phenomena of the inner world of man's nature and life. Like the children of to-day, whose habits of mind they largely shared, these children of long ago projected themselves into the world about them, imputing personality and will to inanimate things, and peopling the earth and the sea with beings sometimes touched with divinity, and sometimes allied to the brute nature and the brute forces. When they endeavored to explain what they saw about them, instead of framing a scientific theory, as we should do, they created a myth. The thunderstorm, which to us suggests certain electrical and atmospheric conditions, brought before their eyes and minds the figure of a dragon, at which the heavenly archer was directing his swift and flashing arrows. Under countless names and disguises the sun wanders over the earth, performing great labors, undergoing terrible fatigues, facing appalling perils, overcoming relentless foes. Passed through the imagination of childhood, "the perennial story of the world's daily life," to use Mr. Tylor's phrase, reappears in a series of stories as widespread as the habitations of man, as varied as his fancy could invent, as deep, as vital, and as true as his thought and intelligence permitted.

The mythologies of the Hindus, the Greeks, and the Norsemen contained the germinal science, poetry, and religion of those races; they explained Nature; and they represented human life as felt and understood by these different peoples. The Norse mythology especially is a fairly complete dramatic account of the life of Nature and of the gods and men involved in that life; and it is also a fairly complete representation of human experience in concrete dramatic form. For the myth is something more than an explanation or representation of natural phenomena; it is a dramatic statement of the experience and life of the men who fashioned it. Once aroused, the imagination did not rest in the endeavor to interpret the external world; it passed on into the region of man's inner consciousness and strove to picture him to himself. The heroes who perform such wonderful feats are not only masks of the sun; they are also masks of the human soul in the vicissitudes and struggles of its life; they are the sublime or beautiful images of himself which man projected into the world about him. For mythology not only personifies Nature; it also idealizes man. As the hero, constantly facing foes and overcoming them, constantly confronted by

obstacles and surmounting them; as the wanderer, seeking everywhere for some person or thing lost or longed-for, — the human soul finds its dramatic representation in a thousand forms and its fortunes pictured in a thousand adventures.

For the function of the imagination is twofold: to see things in their essential nature and their universal relations, and to give them concrete form; to turn these abstract ideas or purely material forms into beautiful or striking images. To the senses, by observation alone, the world might have seemed a great piece of mechanism; to the imagination it was a great living organism, — flooded with life, charged with energy, fecund, reproductive, creative. So vital was it, in the vision of those old-time children, that every wood and stream was peopled with beings after their own kind; in every sea there was a beautiful race akin to the wave, the storm, and the light; in every forest a race allied to the ancient solitude, the sacred silence, the brooding duskiness and mystery. Man and Nature were so intimately related that it was no forcing of thought or speech to pass from one to the other; to impute to Nature the thought and will of man, or to discover in the aspects and movements of Nature the counterparts of the aspects and movements of the life of man in the midst of Nature. In this poetic epoch, when the imagination was playing freely with the material which observation had accumulated, men looked upon Nature and saw everywhere the same play of forces which they felt in themselves;

more than this, they saw themselves projected in sublime figures and participating in a world-struggle, symbolized day by day in the heavens, and shared alike by Nature and her human children. For Nature, in the prophetic vision of childhood, was as she will some day become in the vision of science, — a sublime analogy of the growth of man.

IX

The Moral Impress

THE education which has been described did not stop with the training of the senses and the awakening of the imagination; it penetrated the moral nature and bore the fruit of character. For men are organic units, not bundles of faculties, and it is impossible to train any faculty without influencing and affecting the man in every part of his nature. The character formed may not conform to the type which seems to us soundest and highest, but it is very certain that every serious contact with Nature leaves its impress in character, and that the moral nature preserves the record of the long educational process. Men are to-day, in character no less than in faculty, very largely what Nature has made them, and there is truth in Walter Savage Landor's fine lines: —

> "We are what suns and winds and waters make us;
> The mountains are our sponsors, and the rills
> Fashion and win their nursling with their smiles."

There is truth in these lines, not only because of the inevitable influence upon us of surroundings which are constantly present in our senses and thought, but because of our active and positive relations with these surroundings. Our dealings with Nature are passive only so long as her varied life presents itself to us as a spectacle; and even in this neutral relationship there is a certain inevitable education. Mountains, seas, and sky do not leave the dullest man entirely untouched by their influences. The moment we begin to deal with Nature actively or directly our relations become positive, and a powerful influence begins to play upon us. Primitive men did not discover that shelter was necessary to protect them from storms; that clothing was needed to preserve them from cold, food from starvation; that fire made the making of tools and implements possible; that some fruits were good for food and some were poisonous, without receiving a moral training evidenced by character. For men cannot grow in knowledge, and cannot utilize knowledge when they have acquired it, without developing certain qualities which are the moral deposit of the serious use and direction of their faculties. Patience, persistence, self-denial, self-restraint, endurance, and the will to work lie at the foundation of all human development, and were the direct results of the earliest contacts with Nature. The moral quality is universal in spite of our scepticism, and men cannot stand in direct relations with the world at any point without receiving moral influence and training. The moral quality is in the soil under our feet; and a man cannot seriously care for fifty acres of land without insensibly forming a character. He will learn to watch the seasons and to make the most of them; he will slowly master the secrets of farming; but he will also become steadfast, enduring, vigilant, master of his moods, his inclinations, and his disposition. He will learn that great lesson of subordination to the conditions of success which is the inevitable moral product of serious application to a task. In the end he will get a greater moral than material return from his stubborn acres; and, if he is wise, he will discover that Nature returns something better than fruits and grains for the work of man, and that every hour of real toil leaves its impress on the soul of the toiler.

No more heroic toil has been borne by man than that which has been involved in the long process inaccurately described as, "subduing Nature;" for Nature is never subdued; it is man who is subdued by subordinating himself to the conditions which protect the discovery of every natural law, the use of every natural force, and the possession of every natural product. Nature gives nothing to man but beauty, and beauty is really given only to those who open their minds and hearts by education to perceive and receive it. Nature treats man from the beginning as a moral being; she respects his independence and recognizes his equality with herself. She refuses to pauperize him by easy prodigality, to weaken him by putting into his hands forces and treasures the uses of which he has not been trained to understand. On the contrary, she insists upon the planting of the seed before bestowing the harvest; on the cutting of the tree before the building of the house; on the tunnelling or blasting before the discovery of the metals; on long and patient experimentation before the using of steam or electricity; on patient and exact observation before the discernment of the law. In every relation, at every point, character is the inevitable result of any serious contact between men and Nature; and the establishment of every such relationship is so hedged about with moral requirements that it seems at times as if the moral result were the real end to which all intercourse between men and Nature tends, and as if all material products and results were only tokens and measures of moral value. It is impossible to study this aspect of man's relations with Nature without a deepening conviction of the presence of a vital and universal educational quality and purpose in that relation; a quality and purpose which go far to show what Nature really is. The slowly and painfully acquired patience, endurance, self-denial, and self-surrender which have accompanied the gradual but cumulative mastery of natural phenomena, fact, law, and force by men forms the moral foundation upon which society ultimately rests; it is not a complete moral education, but it has made such an education possible; and it has become so much a part of the very texture of man's soul and life that it binds him to Nature not through his senses only, or through his imagination alone, but by means of that which is deepest and most enduring in himself. The fellowship of the race with Nature is not only witnessed in the self-restraint and self-denial by the exercise of which society exists to-day, but it survives in each individual in that moral inheritance which is the most precious bequest which we have received from the toiling, suffering, enduring past.

X

The Record in Language

THE impress of Nature upon man is not only discoverable in the deeps of consciousness and in the bases of character; it shines also on the very surface of all human speech. Men could not, in the nature of things, absorb through their senses and imagination the beauty and significance of the world about them without reproducing this pervasive influence in every form of speech. The ages in which they were making discovery of Nature were the ages in which they were also creating language, — that most marvellous of all

"No more heroic toil has been borne by man than that which has been involved in the long process inaccurately described as 'subduing Nature'"

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the things they have made. Words are so familiar that we have largely lost their first associations, their primary meanings; but when we recover these for a moment, the "faded metaphor" glows again with the light of its earliest poetic substance. Indeed, it is only when we rescue language from the insensibility to its far-reaching relationships brought about by constant use that we realize how poetic the language-makers were, and how great a part the imagination played in the making of language. For language is not only largely faded metaphor, but it is largely a product of man's thought about Nature. The more closely it is studied the more intimate the intercourse between men and Nature is seen to have been, and the more distinct becomes the fact that Nature not only educated men in all manner of skills and arts, but that she furnished them with complete illustration of their inward life by analogy, symbol, and vital processes of every kind.

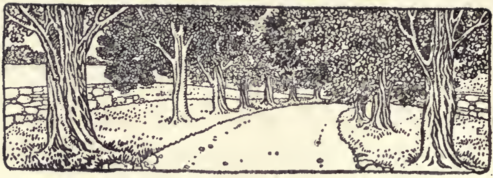
So closely do we stand to the material order about us, and so fundamental is the correspondence between that order and the facts and processes of our lives, that primeval men did not separate them in thought. Nature was divine to them, as she will become again to their later descendants, because she was part of themselves; without her they could not have understood what was going on within their own souls; without the aid she offered them they would have been powerless to express themselves. They had not made that distinction between matter and spirit, which, as commonly understood, has brought so much confusion into thought by making spirit vague and unreal, and matter dead and sensual.

Science has been radically changing this conception of matter of late years, until the materialistic idea of the world is swiftly fading in the presence of a conception which has not only spiritualized matter, but is fast bringing back the world to the place given it by the earliest men. They rested unconsciously in that unity to which we are slowly working our way back through more intimate and exact knowledge. In the childhood of the race, when all things were explained by the imagination, and men projected themselves into Nature as freely and as unconsciously as they looked at the stars or listened to the sea, the outward material fact seemed the necessary picture or symbol of the inward spiritual process, and Nature was the great parable by which man explained himself and fashioned an adequate instrument of expression of himself.

In Nature he found the constant illustration of his intellectual, moral, and emotional life. His language was, therefore, a series of metaphors suggested by natural facts or by his relations to them. To do right was not, in his thought, an abstract thing; it was going in a straight line: and to do wrong was similarly concrete, for it was to take a crooked course. Spirit, so often elusive and intangible to modern men, was the wind to him; something unseen, but unmistakably real; invisible, but of vast range of power; intangible, but all-pervasive.

The words which are borrowed from natural phenomena or processes, to express spiritual phenomena or processes, are numberless; they form the base of every language. But the intimacy of men with Nature is evidenced not less impressively by the great series of metaphors which bring before the mind the spirit or character of a man, a thought, a feeling, or an action, by reference to some appearance or fact of Nature. The world over, in figure, fable, and parable, Nature is drawn upon to set in clear, strong light human character and action. The wolf is everywhere the synonyme for hunger and want, the fox for cunning, the ox for patience, the eagle for audacity, the lion for strength, the serpent for malice. In like manner, the higher and subtler ideas find their most striking and effective illustrations in natural phenomena. In all languages the sky is the symbol of purity, vastness, inclusiveness; the sea, of restlessness; the mountain, of solidity and majesty; the stars, of clearness and fixity; light and darkness, of good and evil, of ignorance and knowledge. So general and so constant is the use of these figures that they form a kind of universal element in all languages; and the more we study them, the more clearly do we perceive that Nature has furnished man with a complete commentary on himself, and that language is a sublime registry of an intimacy once so close and so long continued as to constitute a substantial unity between those who shared it.

As thought clarifies, and deals more and more definitely with the spiritual aspects of man's life, Nature does not recede, but advances with still deeper and more wonderful illustration of these higher phases of the life of her children. Homer had a notable gift for vivid illustration from Nature, and the "Iliad" especially is lighted from beginning to end with bold or beautiful metaphors. But it is in the Bibles of the race, in the Old Testament and the Vedic Hymns, that Nature matches the loftiest thought of man. In these great revelations of the human spirit the obvious illustrations, which children still discover in their games, give place to the perception of that profounder meaning in phenomena and process which makes Nature one great and luminous symbol of the life of man. When the mind has passed through the earlier stages of observation by the senses and discovery through the imagination, there dawns on man a vaster and deeper conception of the world about him and of his relation to it. The order, the force, the beauty, the sublimity of that world become the garment of God to him; and in this unspeakable splendor which enfolds him he sees the sublime pageant of a life not less divine than his own, and flooding him on every side with light on his own nature and destiny. In this stage of his growth Nature enters his speech in a thousand forms, to help him express the highest thought that is in him. Stars, mountains, seas, the infinite heavens, become then the obvious symbols of the life of the spirit. In the book of Job the universe moves before the imagination as with the breath of God; and in the New Testament, when Paul — that great poet struggling with the prose of a dialectic period — would picture man in the mysterious and awful transformation from the earthly to the heavenly, he invokes the aid of Nature, and carries conviction in the familiar image of one of the most familiar natural processes, — "it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."



XI

The Individual Approach

THE educational quality involved in human intercourse with Nature, and the resultant intelligence, training, discipline, character, and development, have been very inadequately suggested in the preceding chapters. The attempt has been made to bring into view the natural background of the human spirit, and to hint at some of the methods by which Nature, in phenomena, force, law, and symbol, has sunk deep into human consciousness, and has been reflected in human skills, arts, sciences, and religions. To describe with any degree of fulness what men have learned from Nature would involve telling the story of the unfolding of the human spirit; to describe it accurately would involve a recapitulation of the sciences. It has been suggested in large outline and as it takes account of the race, for the purpose of bringing into clearer light the ways by which the individual man may bring himself into fruitful educational relations with Nature.

For it is profoundly true, as Froebel has said, that the history of the race is the true educational material for the unfolding of the individual life; because the race has passed through every phase of growth and experience which the individual passes through. It has had its period of infancy, with all the limitations of ignorance and weakness which make the horizon of infancy so narrow and its perils so great; it has had to learn by painful and slow observation and experience what Nature is and what Nature can do for man. It has had its period of youth, with the tidal wave of life and passion steadily mounting, and the imagination playing like a kindling and spreading flame over the entire surface of its knowledge and activity; and in the moment of discovery to the imagination it has dreamed the beautiful and prophetic dreams of mythology. It has had its period of maturity, with the trained eye and hand, the clear intelligence, the disciplined will; and its more exact and arduous studies have created that ordered and tested knowledge which we call science. In the unfolding of each individual life these

periods succeed each other in the order which they followed in the development of the race; so that every phase of the universal life has a deep and vital meaning for the particular life, and a man is really educated in the degree in which he comprehends and shares the life of the race. Training makes for skill, discipline for character, and the acquirement of knowledge for intelligence; but these processes never bear their ripest fruit until they pass on into culture, and become, through vital assimilation, part of the man himself. To enter into the life of the race through its history, its arts, its science, and its religion is to come into such vital relations with it that its experience becomes ours as truly as if we had passed through it. In this way Shakspeare possessed himself of the experience of the Greek, the Roman, the Egyptian, the Italian, and the Englishman of an earlier age; in this way Dante mastered the secret of mediævalism; in this way Hawthorne discerned the spirit of Puritanism in its personal struggle with temptation and sin.

The experience of the race in its intercourse with Nature is preserved, as has been said, in the elementary training of its instincts, and in the deepening and widening of its intelligence recorded in its sciences, arts, skills, and religions; this great history is open to the individual student, and he will learn to read it with intelligence in the degree in which he comes into personal relations with Nature; for while the general experience broadens and deepens the particular experience, the particular experience must precede or accompany the endeavor to master the general experience by acting as its interpreter. When a man gains personal knowledge of Nature he begins to see what Nature has done for all men. To establish these personal relations, to come into direct contact with Nature, is, therefore, one of the chief ways of mastering the secret and mystery of the development of man in this world. It is, however, much more than this; for it is one great method of so broadening, enriching, and nourishing the individual that he becomes a master of life and its forces. The knowledge which a man may gain, directly and indirectly, by observation, imagination, absorption, and self-surrender from Nature, makes him an artist in the use and treatment of his life by putting him in possession of the richest material, by placing him in the best conditions, and by developing and directing the activity of his whole nature.

There are some men to whom intimacy with Nature in her obvious aspects and forms appears to be an inheritance; they are born into it, and are never conscious of the hour from which it dates. Their eyes see the world about them with a clearness and accuracy of observation which turns their hours of play into unconscious study of science. Flowers, trees, shrubs, birds, and animals seem akin to them, and are recognized at first sight, and put in their proper place and order. Other men, failing of this birth-gift and missing the training of the senses in childhood, must slowly and of set purpose piece out a defective power of observation by habits formed in maturity. This introductory relationship with Nature is a resource of inexhaustible delight and enrichment; to establish it ought to be as much a part of every education as the teaching of the rudiments of formal knowledge; and it ought to be as great a reproach to a man not to be able to read the open pages of the world about him as not to be able to read the open page of the book before him. It is a matter of instinct with a few; it may be a matter of education with all. Even those who are born with the eyes and ears of naturalists must reinforce their native aptitude by training.

After a time the habit of exact observation is formed, and the conscious observation becomes unconscious. "The ear can be taught to discriminate among sounds," says Mr. Burroughs, "just as the sense of touch gives us varied impressions through our finger-tips. I think I do this discriminating unconsciously. If I hear a sound, it requires no effort to decide what it is, — whether a bird-cry, song, or call, or the drone of some insect. Every sound has a meaning. *You must be able to take a hint; that is the great secret of observing Nature.* You must see what is going on, and draw conclusions. I visited, some months ago, the grave of Phillips Brooks at Mount Auburn Cemetery, and while I was there I found a bird's nest at the foot of his grave. The way I found it was this: I heard the cry of a bird in distress, and when I looked about I saw a little chickadee with food in its beak. That was hint enough." Mr. Burroughs has a genius for observation; but while the great mass of men can never gain his acuteness and felicity of vision, education in observation will unfold the world to every one who is willing to submit to a training which brings its constant reward with it. Without this training no one can really see Nature in her varied aspects and her familiar and obvious life; and it is the good fortune of modern men that a growing literature of natural observation furnishes stimulus and endless suggestion for such an education. Such writers as Gilbert White, Thoreau, Burroughs, and Jefferies — to make no mention of manuals and text-books prepared for this specific purpose, — open the natural world to one who has remained ignorant of it, and suggest the methods by which one may repeat in his own experience the first steps in observation which the race took so long ago, and upon which so large a part of its knowledge, character, and achievements ultimately rest.

XII

Personal Intimacy

THE delight which comes to the naturalist in his growing acquaintance with tree, flower, beast, and bird; the sense of exhilaration which the scientist feels as he passes from the lesser to the greater law and discerns an ever widening order; the thrill which stirs the imagination of the artist as he discovers a deepening beauty in the world about him; — these are great and real resources, but they are, in a sense, the resources of a limited number of men and women. The technical training essential to the naturalist, the scientist, and the artist is beyond the reach of a multitude to whom Nature is accessible, but the weight of whose work must be put elsewhere. One may have something of each of these great knowledges, and add to it year by year until it becomes measurably adequate; but one can never master any one of them unless he gives his life to it.

There is another kind of knowledge of Nature, however, which is not only possible to most men and women, but which is, in its relation to the complete unfolding of the man by means of culture, more vital and important than any of these special knowledges. For the naturalist, the scientist, and the technical artist are men before they gain or use powerfully any kind of skill;

and the enrichment and development of the personality is the matter of supreme moment with each individual. Every kind of knowledge feeds the mind, and the rivulets which contribute to the volume of the stream have their great and positive value; but the source of the stream is the spring that rises among the hills, out of the very heart of Nature. There is a fundamental personal relation between men and Nature which is a thing apart from special and technical relations; and it is through this relation that man appropriates the material and the impulse which Nature offers for his culture. Art in all its forms is powerless to give this peculiar knowledge and inspiration, and it is not to be had from men; it is the special and distinctive contribution of Nature to individual culture. No knowledge of phenomena, force, law, or beauty — the various aspects through which Nature reveals herself — comes amiss; but there is a knowledge which is apart from these, and which a man may acquire who is neither naturalist, scientist, nor artist; a knowledge at once more intangible and elusive, and at the same time more vital, comprehensive, and fruitful in the personal development.

In association with a man of great gifts and acquirements the richest gains we make are not specific additions to our information, but breadth of view, depth of insight, clearness of vision, re-enforcement of all that is most aspiring in us. It is the vital, not the intellectual contact that exerts the most enduring influence; it is the general force of the man, not his specific skill, that leaves the deepest impress on us. In like manner, in our intercourse with Nature, there is something which flows from the totality of her being which counts for more in our culture than any revelation through phenomena, force, law, or beauty; something which enters into us rather than adds to our information, and which becomes part of us. Thoreau had a knowledge of Nature in her obvious appearances and activities to which his friend and neighbor could lay no claim; but it detracts not a whit from Thoreau's achievements to say that Emerson learned more from Nature than he, and stood in more intimate and vital relationship with her. For while the naturalist studied the world about him with senses of marvellous acuteness, the poet and thinker so allied himself with that world that it fed the very springs of his being, and gave him constant suggestion with regard to the sanest and most fruitful methods of living his life and attaining the truest self-culture.

There is nothing esoteric about this fundamental intimacy with Nature; on the contrary, the very simplicity of the relation makes it difficult of explanation. It is an elementary thing, and cannot, therefore, be resolved into simpler elements. It is as simple as the intercourse of a child with its mother; and, like that relationship, it is mysterious, sacred, inaccessible to all save those who approach it in the right spirit. Like every other deep relationship, it depends somewhat on aptitude, but much more on securing the right con-

ditions and waiting patiently on growth. It is easy to give the directions for acquiring a specific skill because a series of definite acts is involved; it is extremely difficult to suggest the method of developing a friendship into an intimacy because the stages of its growth are invisible and the means are spiritual. There are, however, habits and qualities which are characteristic of those who succeed in establishing this relationship with Nature.

They are, in the first place, very constantly in the presence and company of Nature. They not only seize, they make opportunities for getting into the woods, for loitering in the fields, for exploring the streams, for walking across the country. They seek the most secluded places; they devote hours and days to quiet meditation or observation as far as possible from the noise of men. Whenever they are out of doors they are aware of Nature; they make it a rule, at first, to take note of the sky and the landscape, of the changes of the seasons in their most elusive registry on leaf and grass, and presently they see all these things without any consciousness of meaning to see them. They constantly emphasize the world about them by constantly seeing it and meditating upon it; and so it comes to pass with them that the beautiful order of seasons, stars, flowers, and verdure which surrounds us, and which most of us barely notice, becomes a constant companionship in their most secret thoughts and in their daily occupations.

These persons form the habit, in

the second place, of leaving their cares, work, interests, and self-consciousness behind them when they go out under the clear sky, along the country road, or into the deep woods. They go with an open mind; they are alert to observe, but they are above all things else ready to receive whatever truth, power, or spirit Nature has to impart. They are in the mood to put themselves in the deepest harmony with the world about them; to enter into its vast movement, and to partake of its measureless life. In such a mood much comes to a man from which he is otherwise cut off. For deeper influences are borne in upon us and become incorporate in us when we keep silent than when we speak and act; impulses, emotions, and passions arise within us when we are with our fellows, but the truths that carry conviction and work substantial changes in us become clear to us in solitude. There is no unreality about all this, although in the formal statement it seems elusive and shadowy. The man who goes into the woods, and by self-forgetfulness becomes a part of the woods, is aware not only of a freshening of his nature and a deepening of his thought, but also of a revelation of knowledge through closer fellowship with the order and beauty which enfold him. There enters into his mind, in such moods, something more enduring than the scene about him ; something to which a poet will give expression in verses which are not only touched with a beauty beyond that of words, but in which that beauty becomes the symbol of truth. The man who lacks the gift of expression will not write the verse, but he will see the beauty and be enriched by the truth. The experience of the coming of the landscape unawares into the mind finds expression in one of Wordsworth's most characteristic passages:

"There was a Boy; ye knew him well, ye Cliffs
And islands of Winander! — many a time,
At evening, when the earliest stars began
To move along the edges of the hills,
Rising or setting, would he stand alone,
Beneath the trees, or by the glimmering lake;
And then, with fingers interwoven, both hands
Pressed closely palm to palm and to his mouth
Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,
Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,
That they might answer him. — And they would shout
Across the watery vale, and shout again,
Responsive to his call, — with quivering peals,
And long halloos, and screams, and echoes wild

Of mirth and jocund din! And, when it chanced
That pauses of deep silence mocked his skill,
Then, sometimes, in that silence, while he hung
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
Has carried far into his heart the voice
Of mountain torrents; or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind,
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received
Into the bosom of the steady lake."

The same experience is set forth still more strikingly in lines which seem to have been spoken by Nature herself, so beautifully unaffected and direct are they: —

"I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host of golden daffodils;
Beside the Lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

“ Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay :
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

“ The waves beside them danced, but they
Outdid the sparkling waves in glee : —
A poet could not but be gay
In such a jocund company ;
I gazed — and gazed — but little thought
What wealth to me the show had brought :

“ For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude,
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.”

And we must turn to the same poet for the expression of the deeper experience which waits on the open mind in closest companionship with Nature ; the coming into the mind unawares not only of beauty but of truth, the discernment of the invisible order behind the visible, of the spiritual beyond the material:

> " . . . . that blessed mood,
> In which the burthen of the mystery,
> In which the heavy and the weary weight
> Of all this unintelligible world
> Is lightened: that serene and blessed mood,
> In which the affections gently lead us on,—
> Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
> And even the motion of our human blood
> Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
> In body, and become a living soul:
> While with an eye made quiet by the power
> Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
> We see into the life of things."

XIII

The Fundamental Correspondences

THIS appropriation of Nature through forgetfulness of self and activity of the imagination is a matter of growth. It cannot be accomplished in a day or in a year. The habits of observation and open-mindedness must become so fixed that they are part of ourselves before we become unconscious of them and conscious only of Nature. Many a man is so beset by his habitual interests and thoughts that silence and solitude serve mainly to throw his own personality into more distinct relief, and to emphasize the things from which he would escape. To such a mood Nature can make no disclosure of herself, because she is shut out of sight and mind. But if the man persists in the struggle to free himself from himself, the disseverance will be slowly accomplished, and the time comes at last when Nature is born again in the soul as a new resource. Companionship and open-mindedness steadily persisted in will break down all barriers of self-consciousness, and the relation begun in the merest acquaintance will ripen into the most fruitful intimacy.

The myth-makers read Nature as a great parable of life; in imputing will, reason, and feeling to inanimate things they interpreted and pictured the world about them in terms of their own experience. Nature became an external realization of themselves. In like spirit, although by a very different method, the man who would get from Nature all that she offers for his personal culture must re-establish the primitive unity of consciousness, and must discern in the force, the order, and the movement about him infinite suggestion, hint, and guidance for his own development. He must regard Nature as a part of his own deepest life; a sublime exposition and illustration of the methods of his own soul in its victorious endeavor to realize itself through its activity. For to accept Nature as a teacher, one must not only receive the definite knowledge she has to offer, but must receive also the vital influence which flows from her as from a great fountain of vitality. He who finds his true relation to the world about him, is in the way to be nourished, enlightened, and unfolded by every contact with that world; and in no way more effectively than by carefully studying and adopting, as the spirit and method of his own development, the spirit and method of Nature. The man who holds this attitude will not only get for himself all that Nature has to impart of specific knowledge, but he will be in the way of that mysterious refreshment which comes to those who can forget themselves in the woods or fields, and also of those deep and thrilling disclosures of truth which are sometimes given to the open mind and the active imagination.

Emerson more than once emphasizes the fact that man is an analogist; he declares that "all thinking is analogizing," and that our constant occupation is to study the relations of things. "No one can doubt," says Miss Blow in "Symbolic Education," "that analogy is the key to the process of primitive man. To its influence must be ascribed the universal belief of savages in the animation of all natural objects. Interpreting the world around them through the medium of their own sensations, they endow all objects with life, feeling, volition. In their conception, sun and moon, clouds and winds, sea and mountains are animate beings, whose lives may be interpreted by human analogies." That the results of this early analogizing are misleading and inaccurate as interpretations and explanations of natural processes and phenomena, does not impair the service of this universal instinct nor weaken its authority as a method of discovery. Men everywhere and in all stages of culture analogize because the universe is compact with correspondences, and knit together, part with part, in inseverable relations; one fact sheds light on another, and law brings out law, the world over. Every place at which a man stands is a point from which the whole order of things may be discerned, because he himself is part of that order and all its lines run through him. The myth-makers — the children of the race rather than its fathers — were mistaken in imputing to Nature faculties and feelings like their own; but under the fanciful play of their thought they discerned the great truth of the unity, and, therefore, of the deep and vital relationships, of all things. They were more accurate in their dreams, so far as this fundamental conception is concerned,

than those who hold Nature to be a purely material creation, having no spiritual significance for men.

These correspondences, which pervade all life, make the universe comprehensible, and give it that sublime beauty which shines through it when we discern its spiritual symbolism. We explain ourselves by Nature, and we comprehend Nature through our knowledge of ourselves. Light flashes from fact to fact, from law to law. We discover not only that one aspect of the world involves a corresponding faculty in ourselves, or vice versa, but that truth along one line is truth along all lines; so that a reconstruction of our notions of geology, biology, or psychology involves a reconstruction of our notions of theology. We find our history and destiny bound up with every science, because we are in vital relationship with the whole order of things at every stage of its mysterious progression. The most remote event in geology, the earliest development in biology, affect us in ways past our knowledge; for in whatever direction we search, we find correspondence, analogy, and relationship between ourselves and the things about us. The dreams of youth often have a prophetic element in them; and those marvellous dreams of primitive men which we call mythology had in them a vision of a truth deeper and more comprehensive than any purely materialistic interpretation or explanation of natural fact or process.

This discovery of correspondences and relationships bears its fruit in science, poetry, philosophy, and those upper reaches of thought which ally man to God; but it is also the process by which each individual interprets Nature to himself and appropriates the material and method she offers for his own culture. Companionship and open-mindedness find their supreme rewards in this discovery and appropriation. For the man who persists in keeping in the society of Nature and opening himself to her influences becomes more and more skilled in perceiving correspondences and analogies between the processes of Nature and the processes of his own growth; he discerns with increasing distinctness the concrete parable of his life constantly before him. And he brings the methods of his own unfolding more and more into harmony with the methods of Nature; for he finds in their marvellous order something deeper, more vital, and more fruitful than academic method or device; he discovers the laws and the procedure of life itself.

XIV

The Creative Force

THE analogy between the processes and aspects of Nature and the method and order of our human life becomes clear to a man in the degree in which he feels his vital relationship with Nature and realizes, through observation, imagination, and meditation, the depth and splendor of the movement about him. We are no sooner involved in consciousness with the order of things than we begin to feel the measureless and inexhaustible vitality which fills that order to its very last manifestation. Whichever way we turn we are confronted with a flooding life which clothes the world as with a garment, constantly fading and fraying, but constantly re-woven on invisible and inaudible looms. Sometimes the wave recedes, but it always returns; and even in its ebb we have learned to find the definite and inevitable promise of its flood. Winter is concealment, not absence of life, and the woods are as full of potential vitality when the snow covers them as when the summer sun strives in vain to penetrate the depths of their foliage. Life climbs from the lowest depth of animal to the highest altitude of human existence; from the invisible organism in an invisible portion of water to the most massive tree. It flows like a torrent through Nature; and the visible universe, seen with the eye of science, is but the product of a mysterious and immeasurable stream of force which is so allied with vitality that among all animate things it is identical with it. And the story of the earth, told by the different sciences, is the story of the successive stages by which life has advanced from form to form, from the lowest to the highest. We are enfolded in a vast process, in which life is supreme, and which exists in order that the purpose of life, the design involved in it, may be wrought out. Forms change, every visible thing is subject to modification, decay, and final dissolution; but life passes victoriously on from form to form, and it is only when it retires from the form it once filled out and sustained that the process of upbuilding yields to the process of disintegration.

It is in this mysterious force which we call life, and in the movement through which it manifests itself, that we find the secret and source of power. This is the sublime energy in which all achievement rests; for this is the elementary, original, creative force; the force that makes, sustains, and preserves. There is nothing else which creates or conserves; nothing else which has the gift of immortality; for it is life alone which lives. In the individual career, as in the vast career of Nature, it is this mysterious force which vitalizes and is the conduit of the creative power; and in the degree in which a man shares this mysterious force is he original, creative, fecund. Not in skill, device, system, artifice, or mechanism is originative impulse to be found, but in life; in this inexplicable force with which some men are charged to such a degree that they become fountains of vitality: they influence, inspire, dominate their age, their contemporaries, and posterity. The most obvious characteristic of men of action — of Alexander, Cæsar, Napoleon — is a kind of superhuman vitality; they stand for energy incarnate; they cannot rest; so long as they act under the conditions which are imposed upon all men, they are invincible. Everything gives way before them, and institutions change at their will because they bring life in new forms. They are, to recall Balzac's phrase, "torrents of will;" rushing streams of life, which make new channels in human history and organization.

In like manner the great artists are possessed by a kindred energy of life;

they are insatiable in their hunger for experience; they are driven at times by a fury of passion to know, to feel, and to express all that lies within the reach of a man's soul. Sometimes, as in the case of Marlowe, they recognize no limits to their power, either of appropriation or of expression, but rush on to compass the impossible. Homer, Dante, Shakspeare, and Goethe; Phidias, Michael Angelo, Rembrandt; Beethoven, Schumann, Wagner, — the representative men of the creative order in the field of art; — shared in this prodigious endowment of vitality. They lived as if man had never lived before, as if they were the first possessors of this marvellous power, the earliest explorers of this great mystery. They saw the world with eyes in which the primeval surprise and wonder still lingered; they saw the earth, the heavens, men, and women, and the movement and order of their being, as if these were visible for the first time. They felt all experience, through their own living or through knowledge, sympathy, and imagination, as if experience were something new and unheard of before. And what they saw and felt they expressed with the clearness, the vivacity, the insight, the beauty, and the power which belong to the first vision, the first emotion, and the first utterance. They had various gifts, they worked in ways widely dissimilar, and they used different materials; but the quality which they possessed in common, and which, beyond all their gifts, aptitudes, and skills, characterizes and explains them, is their measureless vitality. They were alive in every sense; they felt with the unspent freshness of youth; they spoke with the authority, the consciousness of veracity, the indifference to denial of discoverers.

And that which interested them most deeply and which they constantly strove to formulate and express was the manifestation, the working out, the play of this mysterious force which flowed through them and about them. They were concerned primarily with life itself in all its forms, and not with abstractions. They saw habit, manner, occupation, dress, equipage, social order, Church, and State not as fixed and final things, existing apart from men in an abstract order, but as the outgrowth of human feeling, acting, and living; and, therefore, as endlessly significant of man's mysterious life. It was due to no accident that the Homeric poems are so saturated with the life of the early Greeks; behind customs, manners, orders, and religion the makers of the epics felt that life so deeply and were so charged with it that they could not tell a story without imparting it. It was the reality behind the forms and institutions with which they were dealing, and it was the reality in themselves. In his wanderings Dante brooded ceaselessly over this mysterious force which works itself out in ways so holy or so unrighteous; the current of which is so deep and irresistible that it cannot be confined in the channels of time and space, but flows on into the shoreless seas beyond. And Shakspeare apparently saw nothing else; for from his earliest to his latest play his eye searches the experience of men as if set to see all that is in life and to force from it a disclosure of its secret by patiently showing, in drama after drama, how it is wrought out in human destiny. These original, creative natures are not only compact of life, but they are absorbed by it. It is not only their distinctive quality and gift, but it is also their peculiar problem. They are like the forces of Nature in their dependence on the vital energy; but, unlike Nature, they are able in part to analyze, comprehend, and illustrate or represent the mysterious power which is in them.

XV

The Great Revelation

WHAT is there in this quality which we call life that gives it such potency and significance? Why do we say of a piece of art, when it strikes home to our imaginations, "That is true to life"? Why do we feel a sudden thrill when out of novel, poem, oration, or play there leaps one of those lines which by their self-revealing authority and beauty give us the assurance of their truth to life? Nothing seems more vague and difficult to grasp than the vital element in Nature, in humanity, and in art; why is it, then, the source of all that endures, the end and culmination of all forms of expression? The more we study the mystery the more mysterious does it become; but only because all elementary and vital processes are wrapped in mystery. No one knows what it is which gives the flower its form of beauty, its breath of fragrance, its fresh and dewy charm ; but this force, whatever it is, is the reality in the flower, and mocks all human skill to reproduce or imitate it. After it has withdrawn from a human form, everything that the eye saw remains, but the form no longer means anything. Perfect as it is, it is an empty shell. The life has gone out of it, and it is nothing.

This mysterious quality is so potent and precious because it is the elementary principle; the inexplicable, unresolvable, divine element in

this mass of matter, which separates death from life, which makes consciousness possible, and which brings in its invisible current all possibilities of knowledge, feeling, thought, and action. It gives matter its only significance, and imparts to visible things of all kinds their only value. So precious is it that it matters little what form of manifestation it takes on. When a living phrase sounds in our ears we are equally spellbound, whether it comes out of the life of the hero, with the light of his great deed on him, or out of the life of the peasant almost invisible in his obscurity. The thing that comes home to us everywhere is not condition or circumstance; it is life. So long as the artist penetrates to the life and reveals it, we are indifferent as to the person portrayed or described. Life alone has a fixed value in art; all other qualities are variable. When we get beneath the surface and touch this hidden force, we feel that we are face to face with the primal mystery; we are in contact with God. For this is the force which permeates Nature and gives her forms their meaning and their beauty; and this also is the force which lifts humanity out of the dust and gives it its dignity and opportunity. It eludes us; but it is always the supreme thing in and to us.

Beyond this elementary value life has another incalculable interest for us: it is not only the divine element in us, but in its working out it reveals itself. There is a great thought or order behind Nature which is being wrought out century after century in all forms, phenomena, forces, and processes; and the supreme interest of the universe for man lies in the discovery of this thought or purpose. That thought is being gradually disclosed to the observation and study of men, and as it slowly dawns on the human mind there comes with it the consciousness that man is reading the thought of God, that the human mind is coming into contact with the divine mind. So every bit of Nature, stone, fish, bird, or leaf becomes precious; they are all parts of a whole; they are links in a chain. Seen in the light of this sublime discovery all matter is penetrated with thought. In like manner, through human life in all its forms, under all its conditions, in all stages of its unfolding, a great thought or order is being wrought out. Sometimes men are conscious of this order and co-operate with it; sometimes they are ignorant of it and oppose it; but whether co-operating or antagonizing, they are always bringing it into clearer light. The law is revealed as distinctly in the punishment it inflicts on those who violate it as in the obedience it secures from those who respect it. Good or evil, high or low, illustrious or obscure, all human lives disclose something above and beyond them, and the process of history is a process of revelation. Men are continually, under all conditions, revealing what is in them, and that revelation carries with it a disclosure of the thought or order which explains their natures and hints at their destiny.

Looking at races in the perspective of history, we see clearly, amid much that is uncertain and obscure, that each race has wrought out some idea in a way peculiar to itself; for what we call the genius of a race is its spirit or way of looking at and using its opportunities. Amid all the confusing currents and movements of Greek life we discern clearly enough two or three racial characteristics; two or three great ideas brought out with unmistakable clearness and illustrated in a wide range of arts and achievements. The Greek race stands for a revelation as well as for a history; it made several things clear to the world. It was only imperfectly conscious that it was bringing these ideas to the light, for in its best estate it was much more occupied with living than with speculating. It was absorbed in living according to its nature, and in the act of living — that is, of working out its nature — it made great additions to humanity's knowledge of itself, its life, and its destiny. The same statement may be made with reference to every race, ancient and modern; and not only with reference to every race, but to every individual. The great figures of art owe their interest to the fact that they reveal something; they disclose their own natures, and therefore they throw light upon life itself. We study Hamlet and Faust endlessly, because beyond the personal interest they awaken, they lift great tracts of life out of the primal darkness into light.

There is, therefore, in every bit of life, noble or ignoble, beautiful or repulsive, great or small, traces of a thought, evidences of an order, lines of design. Every bit of life is a bit of revelation; it brings us face to face with the great mystery and the great secret. In every such disclosure we are not only looking at ourselves, but we are catching a glimpse of God. All revelation of life has the spell, therefore, of a discovery. We hold our breath when we hear a great line on the stage for the first time, or come upon it in a book, because we are discovering something; we are awed and hushed because we are looking into the mystery. There is the thrill, the wonder, the joy of seeing another link in the invisible chain which binds us to the past and unites us to the future. All human experience, action, and expression is permeated with thought; not with the thought of the individual alone, but with the thought which he incarnates and works out. So every touch of life in art — even the slightest fragment — is precious to us. There is something of ourselves in it, and there is something of God.

XVI

Form and Vitality

THE deep and all-embracing current of life with which Nature surrounds us, and which constantly presses upon our consciousness as something divinely great and significant, begets in us, by the irresistible force of analogy, a new and deepening sense of life as the source of knowledge, impulse, and enrichment. Whether we look at Nature or at art, we are constantly reminded that the form is secondary to, and dependent upon, vitality; that life is everywhere and always first, and that skill, method, contrivance, are always and everywhere subordinate. The evidence of true culture is a deepened and enlarged life, not a broadened knowledge; and he wholly misses the secret of culture who does not see that it is an inward growth and that its completeness depends on vitality. If it be true, as has been said, that the act of living is a revelation not only of what is in the man, but of that which is being wrought out through him, then every man who seeks to get out of life all that it has to give, ought to seek, not to shun, its experiences. Browning has set forth in many ways, with all the insight and force of his genius, the great truth that experience is to be sought, not to be shunned; for he who avoids experience avoids also that development of himself in which alone we really live. In such a career the animal life within us, being comfortably housed, fed, and clothed, may go on without incident, emotion, or change; but there is a complete arrest of the life of the soul. The body lives, but the man dies. For the man lives in the exact degree in which he shares in the universal process of living by giving freest play to thought, emotion, impulse, and activity.

The man in whom culture bears its ripest fruit is not often a man of action, but he is always a man in whom the deepest impulse is vital rather than intellectual, and whose supreme interest is in life itself. It is surprising to discover, when one goes over the list of the masters of the arts, how true this is of them; how supreme is their vital interest, and how subordinate their intellectual interest in persons, events, and ideas.

To say of a work of art that it is above all things intellectual, is to assign it a secondary place; for a great work of art must issue from a deeper source than the intellect; it must issue out of life itself. In every such work the intellectual quality is necessarily high, but it is subordinate; the springs of power are elsewhere. The man of culture need not, and as a rule cannot, share in the engrossing activities of his time; vitality is not necessarily evidenced by action; it is evidenced by the things which evoke the deepest interest and call out the fullest sympathy. Shakspeare was only in a very limited way a man of action; but he has portrayed and interpreted action with unrivalled insight and power, because his interest was in human life, and action is the ultimate form of expression of that life. Matthew Arnold, Walter Pater, Amiel, Renan, Lowell, were all representative men of culture; men, that is, of a peculiar ripeness of nature and a peculiar command of beauty of expression. There is an impression among many people that they were men a little removed from their fellows and concerned chiefly with the things of the mind. The things of the mind had, it is true, very great charm for them; but the deepest interest of each of this notable group was vital, not intellectual; it was an interest in men as men, not as minds. "Marius the Epicurean" is one of the text-books of culture, so full is it of that ripe and mellow tone which only the man of culture commands; but it is, above all things, the record of a life, not of a mind; the register of a growth by contact with life in a long and varied series of experiences. Amiel's "Journal" is another of the text-books of culture; but it is, first and foremost, the story of a human soul. And as for Matthew Arnold, his interest in the human problem is so supreme and pressing that he cannot resist the problems of the hour, but must have his say about the religious question, the Irish question, Disestablishment, and the marrying of deceased wives' sisters!

In the process of culture, that which is deepest and richest is this deepening and widening interest in the life of Nature and of men; this perception that in these kindred but severed streams of vitality the potency of all growth and art is to be found. The man who is trying to make the most of life and its opportunities continually comes into closer contact with the vital stream because he finds that wherever it touches him it enriches him. He discovers that every person he meets, whether exalted in station or obscure, has something to impart to him. One of the most eloquent and influential men of the century in this country made it a practice to learn the secrets of every man's skill and experience, so far as these were properly communicable. From the pilot, the engineer, the miner, the farmer, the artist, he drew whatever was most significant in their history and occupation; and so he went through life, enriching himself with those accumulations of knowledge which, although in private hands, form the capital of the race. He was only in a subordinate degree a student; but he became a man of culture because he deliberately drew from other human lives what they had learned. Nothing is more significant of the universality of the process of revelation through human life than the fact that whenever a great writer describes the most commonplace persons, in the light of this revelation, these persons at once become absorbingly interesting. When George Eliot or Thomas Hardy studies them, the village folk, to their oldest neighbors so uninteresting, become at once comic, pathetic, or tragic. The laws of life are being worked out through them, character is being formed, and the great story of man, beside which all other narratives are dull and colorless, is written in their occupations, traits, habits, and experience. Every bit of human life is significant and precious; that is the first lesson which the man who desires to bear in him-

self the ripest fruits of culture must learn.

This vital disclosure of truth is conveyed to us not only in all persons, but in all relations, happenings, and activities. In every aspect of life there is the revelation of a law or a principle, and all life becomes educative and contributes to our enrichment when we act upon this hint. The re-discovery of the sanctity of the primary and universal relations of men in the family, the State, and the Church is one of the great achievements of this century, and it is no exaggeration to say that we have not as yet begun to comprehend what these relations and institutions mean in their educational influence upon us; in the light they throw, either directly or by analogy, on the deepest human problems;

and in the immense deepening of impulse and experience which they effect in humanity at large. When we have taken the attitude of teachableness, all things teach us, and life sweeps past us, not to devastate but to enrich us; all experience ripens us, as the Nile turns Egypt from barrenness to bloom. And when we turn to art we find ourselves searching more and more eagerly for the life behind the form; for we realize that the form is the fruit of the life. We cannot comprehend Job, Isaiah, and Paul until we have learned the Hebrew temperament and thought; we are shut out of the innermost beauty of Greek art in sculpture, building, poetry, and oratory, until we have discerned the genius of the Greek race. All these great artists and all these great arts lead us back to the vital force whose exponents and achievements they were. For in the world of men, as in that of Nature, it is that force which creates, fertilizes, and sustains ; and we are able to make the most of ourselves only as we keep in its current.

XVII

The Method

THE deepest and most inclusive impression which Nature conveys to us is that of exhaustless vitality; all other impressions are subordinate to this, and are, indeed, involved in it; for the life within every natural form is that which gives it interest and significance. And next in importance to the fact of life comes the method of life, — growth. Through an endless series of phases the life of the physical world has manifested and worked itself out; but in all times, so far as we know, in every sphere and stage, in every form and condition, the method has been the same. Wherever life holds its own in the world, growth takes place; life and growth are everywhere bound together so closely that it is impossible to see the one without seeing the other; for life appears to have no other way of manifesting itself. From the seed to the fruit in which the plant fulfils its nature and function, from the egg to the perfected animal, from the primordial cell to the complete man, the process by which life evolves its potency and discloses its aims is the process of growth. No other method is known to Nature; and the universality of this method, and the completeness with which, so far as we can see, life is limited to it and identified with it, puts it in importance on a level with the mysterious force to which it is bound in indissoluble union. So completely are life and growth involved in each other that we cannot conceive of either apart from the other; they are as thoroughly blended together as thought and style in the highest order of writing.

Growth is a vital as distinguished from a mechanical process; it partakes, therefore, of the mystery which envelops the essence of life wherever it appears; it is inexplicable and unresolvable. It cannot be understood, and it cannot be imitated; it has the perennial interest and wonder of the miraculous; there is an element of the divine in it because it is God's way of working in this world. As we study it the impression deepens within us that we are face to face with a power not ourselves; with a method which not only transcends our under-

Method

standing, but from which our finest skill is differentiated not only in degree but in kind. Men have done wonderful things with thought, craft, and tools; but the manner of the unfolding of a wild-flower is as great a mystery to-day as it was when science began to look, to compare, and to discover. We can master the construction of Westminster Abbey or of the Cathedral at Amiens, but the primrose and the aster keep their secret inviolate. Between the thing that grows, however simple in organization, and the thing that is made, however complex and highly elaborated, there is a gulf set which has never been crossed. Mechanism is marvellous, but growth is miraculous; and the two are set in perpetual contrast.

The most obvious characteristic of

growth is the fact that it is an unfolding, an expansion from within, a development of some germinal form; it proceeds not by additions from without, but by evolution from within. The seed so entirely disappears in the process which it sets in motion that it would never be connected with the fully grown plant but for the reproductive function which binds the last stage to the first; the acorn is so swallowed in the tremendous life which is liberated from its tiny shell that no one would dream of its relation to the oak if the tree did not bear again the seeds of other trees as vast as itself. But, despite the disparity between the seed and the plant, the acorn and the oak, all the possibilities of these marvellous unfoldings are wrapped up in the insignificant germs. There is nothing in the massive structure of the oak which was not potentially in the acorn, nothing in the delicate loveliness of the rose that was not in the bit of hard stuff from which it grew. There has been no change of nature, no addition of foreign substances; there has been simply the complete unfolding of all the possibilities of vitality, magnitude, form, and beauty which were folded up in the germ. There is perhaps nothing more incredible in Nature than the development of the oak from the acorn, when one takes into account the almost incomprehensible disparity of size between the two and the force put forth in lifting so vast a mass to such a height in the air, and anchoring it so firmly in the ground that the rage of the elements leaves it unscathed. Before such a mystery of vital expansion science stands silent; for the result has been achieved so silently, with such ease, with such absence of tools and implements, with such continuity of action, that the tree, like a great work of art, gives no hint of the process by which it was made. It was not made, it grew; and that is all we can say about it.

The perfection to which it finally comes in type, form, and color is conditioned on the completeness with which the potentialities of the original germ are developed. Nature makes distinct and highly organized types; she does not make incongruous aggregations of unrelated materials. She does not artificially bring together materials which have no deep affinity; she starts from a living germ, and that germ takes to itself the substances which are vitally related to it, and rejects all other substances. It does not enlarge itself by addition, but by expansion; and the result is not a mechanical combination, but a new and independent creation, symmetrical, harmonious, and complete. Through a thousand forms, in the greatest apparent confusion and complexity of condition, Nature unerringly perfects her types; a host of living things grow together out of the same soil, in the same atmosphere, under the same sky; but these living things never lose their individuality. On the contrary, they intensify and clarify it.

This type is determined by the germ; but the germ reaches out and fulfils its potentialities of growth and life only as it is nourished and enriched by the elements which surround it. The process involves two great factors: a vital germ at the centre, which has the instinct or faculty of selection; and soil, air, light, heat, and moisture, which minister to and make possible this unfolding. The seed, the blade, the fully developed tree, shrub, or grain need nourishment, and so they take freely from the soil, the atmosphere, and the sky; but what they take they incorporate into themselves. The germ expands a thousand-fold, taking to itself material from without, which, in bulk and weight, dwarfs it into insignificance; but it is not overwhelmed and lost; on the contrary it recasts the mass which it appropriates, masters it, shapes it to new ends, and subordinates it wholly to its own purposes. So completely does it possess itself of that which it takes out of the elements that all trace of the distinctive form and existence of these elements disappears. The most searching analysis cannot separate the different substances which have gone to the making of a rose; the delicate and sensitive flower, whose life is a bloom and a breath, seems like a spiritualization of the particles of matter which have entered into it, a fragrant soul escaping from the body of earth which imprisoned it. In that final synthesis of growth we are confronted with the universal miracle of harmonious and independent creation out of a mass of material which gave no hint either of the form of the final product or of its captivating loveliness. The secret of this preservation of the type in such a vast complexity of conditions is found in the law under which each living germ selects and appropriates those elements only which are vitally related to its own structure and quality. Each germ takes those elements which it can assimilate and rejects all others. Surrounded by countless other germs, in a world which presents the greatest variety of those foods which nourish plant life, each germ, without hesitation, uncertainty, or pause, unerringly takes what belongs to it, and is as indifferent to all foreign substances as if they did not exist. So the type preserves its integrity in a world full of substances which, but for the law which governs its development, would mar its individuality and make its perfection impossible.

XVIII

Distinctness of Individuality

THIS is also the method of men and women of the creative order. The distinctive quality of original persons is sharp, clear, definite individuality; unmistakable integrity of type. Minds of the highest rank are characterized, not by immense acquirements, but by adequate self-development, and by complete adjustment to the life about them; by a connection with that life so vital and intimate that they gather it into themselves and become, in a free and noble sense, its highest products.

The man of genius is no more separated from his fellows than is the mountain peak from the earth; on the contrary, the higher the peak the greater the mass of earth which lifts it skyward. Genius involves not less, but more humanity in its possessor; it implies not separation from, but identification with, humanity. Homer stood on the shoulders of the Greek race; he was their debtor quite as much as they were his. But Homer did not annex to his own experience in any external way the experience of his race; he absorbed that experience and made it his own. Moreover, he took only what was vitally related to himself; he was a Greek to the heart; the great typical man of his race. If he had attempted to be also a Persian, an Egyptian, or a Phœnician, his would never have become the clear, resonant voice of all Greece, nor would his work be the common possession of all modern speech.

That which impresses us in writing of the highest order is not miscellaneous knowledge, but flavor, raciness, individuality, the tang of the race and the soil. A secondary writer may have scholarship, skill, talents of various kinds, but his words do not strike home to the imagination; they do not impress us as being inevitable; we are conscious that they might have been written in any climate, under any sky. Burns's songs, on the other hand, are as unmistakably a product of Scotch soil as the heather; and Scott's greater stories are indissolubly welded to local tradition, legend, and history. To take an illustration nearer home, the "Scarlet

Letter" could not have been written outside of New England. Its roots are sunk deep in the deposit of centuries of Puritan thought and feeling. Writers of the order of Burns, Scott, and Hawthorne assimilate all the elements of the soil, the atmosphere, and the sky which are vitally related to their own natures and harmonious with their own genius, and perfect their personality by taking on the personality of their race. There is no loss of individuality in this process; on the contrary, there is a vast enlargement and clarification of personality. A notable and beautiful illustration of this clear and victorious development of a type by assimilation of what was harmonious in its surroundings is furnished by the career and character of Lincoln, who was not only a complete individual

"The endless profusion of exquisite forms which the fer
strewn with a lavish hand in the depths of the woo
take on implies the inexpressible beauty of the u
verse."

(*page 2*

type, but a perfect national type as well, —

> "New birth of our new soil,
> The first American."

He appropriated from his country, his people, and his time that for which his nature had an affinity, and he became original, creative, typical, by self-unfolding. A man of this temper and methods uses books and technical processes, but is never their product. Whatever he takes of discipline, training, or knowledge, he makes so completely a part of himself that the processes and materials are entirely lost in the final product. His discipline and training leave no trace save in his self-command, his skill, and his effectiveness. His knowledge is so blended with his experience that he completely possesses it, instead of being possessed by it as is the pedant; and when he gives it out in expression, it has taken some new form or received some fresh interpretation. He uses experience, knowledge, all the materials of power which surround him, not to efface the lines along which his nature craves development, but to emphasize them. In every form of expression he gives us not his acquirements but himself; and his acquirements return to us so merged in the final product that we cannot trace them. A nature which has this power of drawing upon all the sources of influence, intelligence, and vitality about it, becomes clairvoyant and typical. It attains such profound and unconscious harmony with the life in which it is enfolded and by which it is nourished that it speaks at last out of the depths of that life and reveals its secrets.

A man of this temper knows what is in the heart of his race. He feels every movement of its unconscious life; he divines its thought; and he becomes in the end, on a colossal scale, the man of his time and his people. He is simple, harmonious, individual. Such a man was Tourguenieff; in certain respects the most marvellous race interpreter of modern times. An artist of subtle and splendid gifts, he seemed to know intuitively all the secrets of the Russian people; and in those compact and impressive stories of his, so free from all extraneous discussion, so concentrated in spirit and action, so swift and deep and powerful in sentiment and movement, the Slavonic nature breathes and suffers and acts. From this point of view a further reference to Lincoln is almost inevitable. Born and bred on the old frontier, with the scantiest formal education, uncouth in figure, he seemed to many, in the critical hour when he became President, fatally untrained for the responsibilities of the time and the place. When the news of his nomination was received in a certain university town, a teacher of high character and wide culture is reported to have said that the country would have a good man in the White House if only some better trained man could write his messages and speeches for him! Those messages and speeches are, with the exception of a few lyrics, the only literature of the great struggle. At least three of those public utterances have already become classics, not only because of their elevation and nobility of thought and feeling, but because of their rare beauty of style. Among all the speakers of his time, accomplished orators, students of rhetoric, masters of the art of eloquence, Lincoln is the only one whose speeches are likely to survive.

This superiority, it is hardly necessary to say, was neither accidental nor spontaneous; like all superiority, it rested on a solid basis of preparation. Lincoln was, in some respects, the most genuinely educated man of his time; but his education was vital, not formal; individual, not academic. There is no antagonism between these two kinds of education; on the contrary, in the ideal training they must always combine and harmonize. There is a disposition, however, to assume that formal education is the only education. From this point of view men like Shakspeare and Lincoln are inexplicable. For every great work of art involves adequate education; chance is as finally barred out of the world of art as it is out of the world of nature.

Lincoln's education becomes more complete the more one studies it. In his own way he acquired a knowledge of his people, of his time, of himself, and of a few books which, in its depth and thoroughness, made him the master not only of a great movement but of a great language. Men of the type of Gladstone and Sumner give the impression of having sought near and far for information and illustration. They impress us as having made large conquests in the field of knowledge; but we are soon aware that their gain has been more by conquest than by incorporation. They have annexed rather than absorbed. In the speeches of both these eminent men of affairs we hear the voice of the student rather than the voice of the man. Lincoln, on the other hand, always gives us a single harmonious impression of himself. We are always in contact with the man. Whatever knowledge he has acquired and whatever training he has received are tributary to the original force of his own personality. And this is true of all men of the creative, as contrasted with the secondary, order; they are never, under any circumstances, eclectics; they are always, under all circumstances, intensely individual. They are never composite; they are always strongly marked types. Lincoln took the elements for which he had an affinity; all others he left alone.

XIX

Vital Selection

NO age has needed to learn this lesson of enrichment by growth, by development of what is germinal within us, and by selection of what is vitally related to us in the world about us more than our own eager, restless, eclectic time, with its wide sympathies and its tireless curiosity, its tolerant temper, its measureless thirst for knowledge. The endeavor of too many men and women of this generation is, not to develop their own personality, but to absorb the knowledge of the whole world. They are anxious to place all religions on the same basis of authority, to harmonize on the instant the conclusions of all schools of thought, to drain all the sciences of their ultimate truths, to practise all the arts, and to gather about themselves the products of the handicrafts of the entire globe. The result is an immense extension of intellectual interests and activities, and in many cases a fatal blighting of individuality. The note which such persons give forth in various forms of expression ceases to be clear, authoritative, and prophetic; it is muffled, indistinct, and non-resonant. It is made up of echoes.

It is not unusual, in these days, to hear men and women of intelligence use vocabularies made up entirely of generalized words; words of such vast and vague implication that not one phrase strikes fire, not one sentence bites into the mind. Everything is misty, uncertain, indefinite. A fog seems to envelop the entire field of thought. Through this fog, impressive outlines sometimes loom portentous for the moment; but they dissolve and fade into nothingness the instant we begin to feel that we are coming into contact with reality. There is no reality in this kind of intellectual activity, as there is no conveyance of thought, no real expression of individual conviction or force in the utterances of those who succumb to this disintegrating method; a method which destroys originality and makes a genuine intellectual life impossible. A vocabulary is never effective, expressive, and authoritative unless it is vitally related to the person who uses it, is determined by his nature and grows out of his experience. It is a garment woven in the invisible chambers of a man's inmost life, — not a mass of garments gathered at random in Algiers, Jerusalem, Athens, and Calcutta, and worn without reference to variation and difference of size, color, or design. In language, as in all forms of expression, freshness, force, and sincerity depend on the vital relation between the thought and the word. A vocabulary of generalized words has no more reality of relationship with the person who uses it than has the ugly idol he imports from India, or the Bayeux tapestry which he buys in Paris or London; it is a manner of speech which has been borrowed, and which has no significance, therefore, as a disclosure of temperament and character. It implies nothing in the way of intellectual quality or habit save a retentive memory. The arts furnish a conclusive illustration of the law of growth which, in the natural world, develops the perfect type, and in the world of man the creative mind. In art definiteness of thought and sureness of touch are the fixed conditions of success; everything turns on absolute clarity of vision and distinctness of execution. Confusion of inharmonious ideas and vagueness of treatment are fatal to originality or effectiveness. The method of setting forth the highest ideals of character, of beauty, or of thought, is simple and unmistakable: it is through the perfection of the type. The beauty and power with which the general conception or the universal experience are set forth, depend on the definiteness with which the individual type is realized. A literary artist of the third class, who wished to express the passion of ambition, would brood over the idea and finally shape a character to illustrate it; and the result would be an inferior piece of work, in which the abstract idea, which properly belongs to philosophy, would be primary; and the concrete illustration, which is the distinctive creation of art, would be secondary. On the other hand, when a great artist like Shakspeare deals with the problem, he creates a marvellously distinct personality like Macbeth, so real, so individual, so instinct with life, that in the very perfection of his flesh and blood, the reality of his relation to the world about him, he becomes forever after an incarnation of the passion which masters him. In the very narrowing of the general idea into the limits of a genuine, breathing human spirit its depth and reality are finally disclosed with almost overwhelming impressiveness. Vague generalizations have no power to inspire the artist; success in this highest and most permanent of all forms of expression depends on definite, clearly realized, strongly marked types; and the more perfect the type the wider and more complete the revelation of the general truth which is made through it.

This law not only governs in the world of art, but also in the world of mind and character. Original, creative persons do not attain power and influence by the method of aggregation, by adding knowledge to knowledge; they attain full self-unfolding by developing what is germinal within them along natural lines; they grow by the expansion which comes from appropriating that which vitally relates itself to them. The vocabulary of such persons is not made up of generalized words; it is in the highest degree specialized; it is so completely individualized that the stamp of ownership is visible on every sentence. The words are grasped close to the roots, where they are most succulent and fresh. This is the secret of picturesque, vivid, first-hand style; which is never composite or derivative, but always simple, immediate, and intensely personal. It is the peculiar peril of this age that there are so many things to obscure the working of this law. The opportunities of study and travel are so great that the age tends to a fascinating but unproductive eclecticism in education, philosophy, and religion, rather than to a high and fertile originality. Active minds, full of curiosity and eager to explore the round world in quest of the new, the fresh, and the unknown, waste and debilitate themselves by endeavoring to take into themselves that which is not related to them and which they cannot assimilate. They add to their knowledge, but they do not add to their power. Their minds are like many houses into which one goes, at this end of the century, which are furnished from the scourings of the globe, but are without harmony or individuality of taste, order, or ornament; private museums, filled with fragments and survivals of civilizations, odds and ends of the centuries. This, it need hardly be said, is not home-making; it is not the

fruit of the art spirit; it is simply collecting, which is a very different matter.

The universal range of the mind, without definite aim, indiscriminate, omnivorous, excited, does not secure education, freedom, power, or originality. It is a vicious method; it results in a derivative instead of a creative life of the mind, and it involves a slow decay of individuality. Men and women who fall victims to this temptation to waste their force over a wide field instead of intensifying it by concentration, become at last vague generalizations of the vital principle rather than clear, powerful, and commanding types. In their endeavor to grasp all, they forget that truth comes not by searching, but by growing; that it cannot be gathered here and there by the tourist, but must be patiently absorbed and assimilated.

The capacity for truth is exactly measured by the capacity to incorporate it into character. Beyond the limits of that capacity it is impossible to go, strive and struggle as we may. We can only take in that knowledge which is vitally related to us. We may go on indefinitely adding facts, knowledge, ideas which are not related to us, but we are neither enriched by them nor can we command them. They do not belong to us; they often encumber and smother us. In electing to be original and creative, to make any real contribution to life, or to secure the fullest development which life affords, one must elect to pass by a great deal of knowledge because it is impossible to absorb it. The tree, which lives by an infallible instinct, if such a phrase is permissible, takes out of the soil and the atmosphere those things which feed it, in quantities which it can absorb. In like manner a human soul can take out of life only those elements which belong to it by reason of affinity with its type. It must leave other elements alone; they belong to other types of mind and character. One may be *either* an Oriental or an Occidental, but one cannot be *both* without a confusion of fundamental ideas which goes to the very bottom of one's nature; and yet this is precisely what a great many people are trying to be to-day. If one wishes to have a complete and rounded personality and to avoid being a heterogeneous collection of unrelated and inharmonious parts, one must understand his own type and appropriate those things which are vitally related to it. The artist, the man who strives after perfection, is revealed, as Schiller says, quite as much by what he discards as by what he accepts. Rejection is quite as important as selection, in a fully developed and productive life.

XX

Repose

THE process of growth, with the evidences of which the world overflows, is as mysterious as the vital principle behind it. We can lay our hands on all sides on its results; but we never actually see it. We cannot accurately mark its stages, nor can we exactly measure it by time duration; we can say of it, however, that it is the unfolding of that which lies in the germ by the appropriation of those elements which assimilate with it. There is one quality which everywhere characterizes it, — the quality of repose.

The living thing that grows, whatever its form, surrenders itself entirely to the process. It does not vacillate between different aims; it is in no uncertainty as to its type; it makes no experiments in the choice of the elements upon which it is to draw sustenance. By the law under which it lives it selects the things which it needs, and opens itself to their reception. It is always expanding, and it is always in repose. Deep and genuine growth is conditioned on repose; for repose implies neither sluggishness nor inactivity; it means quietness and calmness at the centre of activity. Emerson long ago noted, as others had noted before him, that the Greek heroes, no matter how strenuously engaged, are always in repose. In this attitude, it need hardly be said, these typical figures are in harmony with the spirit of Greek art; an art which was close to Nature, and which is still, in many of its aspects, the most complete expression and interpretation of Nature.

This quality of repose which lies in the very heart of Greek art is an evidence of the profound artistic instinct of the Greek race. It was the peculiar gift, not of a sluggish, but of an intensely alert and active people. It was, therefore, a positive, not a negative, quality; something essential to the very nature of their art. And the more closely we study that art the clearer and more profound becomes its significance. Repose is part of its perfection; in a sense, the very soul of it. For it was born of a clear perception of ends; a clear adjustment and measurement of means; complete accord between the worker and his work. There are no signs of agitation, restlessness, nervousness, or uncertainty in the Greek plays, the Greek statues, or the Greek buildings. There is deep thought; there is definite conviction; there is profound feeling; there are evidences of tireless work: but all these diverse elements and forces are subjected so completely in the artist's mastery of his materials that they are held in the poise of final repose. The repose is the more significant because this art, of all the art men have created, was the most natural and spontaneous. It was the direct fruit of the life behind it; the natural expression of the race which fashioned it. Repose is the key to the universality of Greek art and to the perfection of the types which it produced. It separates that art at once and forever from the art of the moment, and from the art of the provinces. It owes its supremacy to the qualities which are fused together in the repose which lies at its heart.

There is nothing more impressive as an exhibition of power than the expansion of a great tree, and its power of resisting the storms and winds; but that process is soundless. Eternal quiet seems to brood in the shadow of this miracle of strength and silence. The depth and range of the growth of the human spirit are conditioned on a kindred repose. Man must really rest in Nature if he is to be fed. It is true, there must come, in every life, crises of emotion, thought, and action, but these crises are exceptional; they are not normal conditions. They are transitional, not permanent. One passes through them, if he learns what they have to give, into a deeper repose; for repose, in the last analysis, is adjustment to the conditions of life, sound and true relations with the things which surround us. It is, therefore, not a matter of temperament; it is the fundamental condition in all free and harmonious growth. The man who is in haste is always out of relation to things; he has forgotten something, he has not given himself time enough to accomplish the work he has in hand, or he has undertaken more than he can execute. His haste implies maladjustment; it means that he has blundered, or that he is inadequate to the task he has assumed. If a man has secured a true adjustment to his conditions and opportunities and holds right relations to his world, he may bear great burdens and carry on vast activities without agitation or restlessness. The man of most heroic labor is often the man of calmest manner and voice; while the man in whom haste is so evident that his very presence wearies and irritates is generally superficial and ineffective. Mastery is attained by those only who keep their minds in quietness. The vaster the responsibilities and the more intense the activities, the deeper the need of perfect poise. Napoleon was never so cool as in those critical moments when the issue of the battle hung in the balance. A lyric may be written in the exaltation of great excitement, but the writing of a Divine Comedy necessitates a repose so deep and enduring that the agitations and anguish of life are, by its very vastness, robbed of their terror. Haste is fatal to noble work; agitation destroys the possibility of permanent achievement. The travellers who really see and are able to give intelligent reports of the countries through which they pass are not those who, by the rapidity of their movement, envelop themselves in clouds of dust; the men and women who discern with level vision the real conditions in society do not, by the violence of their emotions, surround themselves by blinding storms. Rich natures have all the elements of passion, imagination, and emotion which shake the earth and blot out the heavens; but natures which translate such possibilities into character and achievement hold these elemental forces in absolute control. Art is, by its very nature, in eternal antagonism with haste, agitation, restlessness, or violence.

In the stimulating air of this continent this lesson of calmness and repose is sorely needed. A vast amount of our energy goes out in sterile activity. We rush from one kind of knowledge to another, eager, breathless, and excited, and forget that culture — the real mastery of knowledge — is not a fruit to be plucked by a quick motion, but a fertility which follows the silent falling of the rain and the slow enrichment of the invisible soil. Abnormal nervous excitability is often confused in this country with intellectual activity; nerves are mistaken for brains, and the restlessness of the one for the productivity of the other. Nerves are of immense importance, but they are distinctly non-creative. They have never developed a great thought, nor given even a passing inspiration to art. Many Americans move from point to point, from interest to interest, so constantly that they live in a cloud of dust, which overhangs the highway and hides the heavens. We trample the earth until it becomes hard under our feet instead of permitting it to become rich and fertile. We rush headlong over delicate growths, instead of tenderly and piously fostering them.

Riding one day over the plains at the end of a long detachment of men, General Custer made a sudden change of direction at the head of the column. As the men reached a certain point they rode off to the right, rank after rank, as if an invisible hand had smitten them out of their course. The

curiosity of those at the rear of the line was excited, and as they approached the point they looked carefully to see what had caused the change of direction, and they found in the desert a bird's nest full of tiny eggs. A long detachment of men had turned aside rather than crush that bit of life in the universal aridity! There is a parable in that incident which Americans would do well to study.

A man must have quiet and solitude in order to find himself, — one of the great ends of human seeking. There are many who find knowledge but do not find themselves, and their knowledge remains, therefore, unproductive. No man can go home to himself until he has separated himself from the crowd. We cannot be fed either by Nature or experience until we are open to receive delicate and elusive impressions; and a restless nature is not sensitive to impressions. It throws them off because it is too much preoccupied and perturbed. The greatest literary artist we have yet produced on this continent passed nearly twelve years in entire obscurity. Those years of repose and silence guarded and nourished a genius of singular delicacy and purity, and permitted its possessor to sink the roots of his thought deep into the historic soil beneath him, to saturate himself with the life behind him, to learn by a thousand contacts through his imagination the subtle forms of human experience which he was to interpret with a power so finely trained for its task. They made possible also the full development of that marvellous style which so perfectly combines beauty and flexibility with sensitiveness to receive and power to convey the most complex and elusive impressions. It is impossible to imagine the genius of Hawthorne repining in restlessness and agitation. The solitude and isolation which, like a calyx, protected the growth of his genius were favorable to, but were not essential to, repose of spirit. One may secure and preserve that repose in the turbulence of a great city, — as Shakspeare surely found and preserved it in the London of the sixteenth century. For repose does not depend on external conditions; it depends on sound adjustment to tasks, opportunities, pleasures, and the general order of life.

XXI

The Universal Life

"ON every height," says Goethe, "there lies repose." Mere altitude, by effacing the limits and boundaries which shut in the view on every side, calms the spirit and steadies the nerves. The sense of pressure, of limitation, so constant and often so oppressive in the routine of ordinary life, vanishes, and then comes in its place a sudden exhilaration. For there is something liberating in the mere physical range of a great view; it not only relieves the eyes from the presence of things which limit the vision, but it conveys the impression of universality. The fields merge into the landscape, the counties become states, and states are lost in the vast expanse of the continent. From some of the higher Alps one looks down, not on Switzerland or France, but on Europe; from the summits of the Rockies one sees, north and south, the sublime range of hills which binds half the western hemisphere into one.

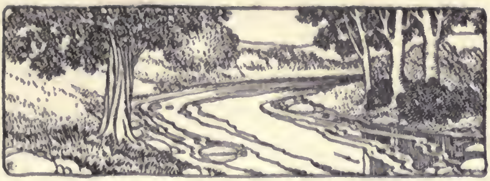
Every mountain summit suggests to the imagination that totality of life of which the individual life is part. The county has its own autonomy, but it is a feeble political entity compared with the more inclusive authority of the state; the state, however powerful, is but a subdivision of the Republic; and the Republic, in turn, but one member of a great group of nations. Every political entity has its own independent life, but the depth and power of that life depend quite as much on the closeness of its contact with civilization as on the nourishment which it draws through its roots from its own soil; for the germ cannot secure complete expansion unless it is fed on all sides by substances which it can assimilate because they are harmonious with it. The measure of savagery is the isolation of the tribe; the measure of civilization is the variety, the number, and the closeness of the contacts of a people with the world at large. In like manner, the individual life must hold individuality and universality in right and sound relations; it must have its depth of root, but it must also have its breadth of interest, knowledge, and relationship. The totality of things is involved in every minutest manifestation of life, as perfection of detail is involved in the splendor and completeness of the whole. The endless profusion of exquisite forms which the ferns, strewn with a lavish hand in the depths of the woods, take on implies the inexpressible beauty of the universe; while the majesty of systems sweeping through space hint at the loveliness of the wildflower hidden beside the rock in the wildest and most inaccessible wood of the smallest world in all the shining company. To keep ourselves in constant touch with the totality of things is, therefore, a primary law of sound living. It is the whole globe which ultimately sustains the growing tree, not the bit of soil on which it stands; it is the entire vitalizing power of the sun which touches and vivifies it, not a group of detached rays. There are no boundary lines in Nature. It is a matter of indifference to her where France ends and Spain begins, where Europe touches her eastern limits and Asia erects her western gates. In Nature all things are held in indissoluble union; nothing is isolated or detached: for isolation and detachment in the physical order mean death. In every part the whole is implied, and every detail of creative structure or life affirms the unity and solidarity of the universe.

In this, as in every other sphere of choice, decision, and action, complete living lies in harmonizing two apparently antagonistic tendencies. That antagonism is, however, more apparent than real. In the perfection of the fern lies the promise of the perfection of the universe; in the perfection of the individual type lies the promise of the perfection of humanity; in the definiteness with which the particular idea is realized lies the clearness with which the general idea is revealed. In the arts the universal ideas cannot be expressed, or even hinted at, save by means of persons, forms, and symbols of the most sharply defined character. Every work of art approaches perfection in the degree in which it is concrete and definite; the more limited the form the more clear the disclosure of the universal idea. The earlier sculptors endeavored to express universal ideas by vast, confused, and often incongruous symbols, and failed; The Greeks obtained absolute clearness and perfection of harmonious, sharply defined, and concrete illustration, and succeeded where their predecessors had attained only a blurred confusion of impressions. In the drama this law is strikingly and constantly disclosed, on the one hand, in the inability of vague and indefinite characters or action to reveal general truths, and, on the other, by the swiftness and certainty with which the mind is carried beyond clearly drawn persons to the laws of life or the universal significance of certain typical characteristics. In fiction also one finds the most interesting and impressive illustration of this fundamental law of expression. Such characters as Becky Sharp and Colonel Newcome, as Père Goriot and Eugénie Grandet, as Annie Karénina and Sonia, as Madame Bovary and Effie Deans, are as clearly realized in our thought as the persons whose hands we grasp and with whom we have daily speech, — and yet each one is a principle of life incarnate; each one is so identified with a general truth that the character and truth are really identical in our thought. It is, in a word, through the perfection of individuality that universality becomes clear.

This perfection depends, however, in no small degree, on a well-developed and trained consciousness of constant contact with the totality of things. One never really knows his own country until he knows the world; one never really knows himself until he knows humanity. The sense of being part of the great order of things, of being vitally related to the whole race, of being involved in a world-wide historical movement, brings with it a quieting and calming influence. Individual sorrow, suffering, and limitation lose the exaggerated importance with which our feelings invest them when we recognize the range and depth of the movement of universal life. One may become excited when he looks exclusively at the affairs of his own neighborhood, but a glimpse of the universe makes that excitement appear unreal and ridiculous. The sense of proportion is freshened by the consciousness of relation to the totality of things, and the sense of proportion is one of the signs of sanity.

The sense of exhilaration which fills the soul when one slips out of the individual into the universal mood in some hour of mountain climbing, in some fortunate day on the summits, was often felt by

Amiel even in his despondency. "A marvellous day," he writes in July, 1870. "The panorama before me is of grandiose splendour; it is a symphony of mountains, a cantata of sunny Alps. . . . The feeling uppermost is one of delight in being able to admire; of joy, that is to say, in a recovered power of contemplation which is the result of physical relief, in being able at last to forget myself and surrender myself to things, as befits a man in my state of health. Gratitude is mingled with enthusiasm. I have just spent two hours at the foot of the Sparrenhorn, the peak behind us. A flood of sensations overpowered me. I could only look; feel, dream, and think." Five years earlier, in the same mood, he wrote: "I have not yet felt the air so pure, so life-giving, so etherial, during the five days I have been here. To breathe is a beatitude. One understands the delights of a bird's existence, — that emancipation from all encumbering weight, — that luminous and empyrean life, floating in blue space, and passing from one horizon to another with a stroke of the wing. One must have a great deal of air below one before one can be conscious of such inner freedom as this, such lightness of the whole being. Every element has its poetry, but the poetry of air is liberty."



XXII

The Unconscious Life

PERHAPS the greatest refreshment which men gain from Nature at this end of the century flows from the unconsciousness in which her forces are put forth and her processes carried on. The unconsciousness of childhood, says Froebel, is rest in God,—a deep saying, which goes far to explain a great deal of current scepticism and pessimism. For nothing breeds doubt and despair so quickly as a constant and feverish self-consciousness, with inability to look at life and the world apart from our own interests, emotions, and temperament. This is, in an exceptional degree, an epoch of morbid egoism, of exaggerated and excessive self-consciousness; an egoism which does not always breed vanity, but which confirms the tendency to measure everything by its value to us, and to decide every question on the basis of our personal relation to it. It is always unwise to generalize too broadly and freely about contemporary conditions, but there are many facts to bear out the statement that at no previous period in the history of the world have so many men and women been keenly and painfully self-conscious; never a time when it has been so difficult to look at things broadly and objectively, to see things as they are with entire sanity of soul and clearness of vision. All the arts are saturated with morbid self-consciousness; in literature especially, sane, wholesome, and real books in certain departments have become exceptional. Pathology has usurped the place of art, and the artist has become a specialist in diseases of the nerves. Every morbid nature rushes into print, until the weary reader of current fiction is tempted to think that the making of a modern novel involves nothing more unusual in the way of gifts than a diseased mind, a bottle of ink, a few reams of paper, and a friendly or speculative publisher. Introspective meditation, egotistical personal records, crude yearnings, immature ambitions, sickly emotions, unwholesome or premature passions, are spread out before the world with a fulness of detail of which only the wholesome and eternal verities of character and experience are worthy. Poor human nature, as illustrated in some modern fiction and verse, seems to have gone mad with the passion for publicity, and stands naked in the public squares, content with any shame if only people will look at it. The hospital and the dissecting-room have become places of habitual resort, and every morning this humanity of ours, whose diseases we used to shield from public gaze, is laid out on the operating table while the surgeon cuts down to the last quivering nerve for our entertainment. It seems at times as if fiction had become a vast clinic, without the hush and awe with which human suffering has always been witnessed by the pure-minded. Morbid curiosity has bred an irreverence which violates the innermost sanctity of the human soul. How far this attitude is from that of a really devout and noble nature! "We are struck by something bewildering and ineffable when we look down into the depths of an abyss," writes Amiel; "and every soul is an abyss, a mystery of love and pity. A sort of sacred emotion descends upon me whenever I penetrate the recesses of this sanctuary of man, and hear the gentle murmur of the prayers, hymns, and supplications which rise from the hidden depths of the heart." We have become so egoistic that we would rather show our deformities than be passed without notice.

From this heated atmosphere and from these representations of disease, put forth as reproductions of normal life, we fly to Nature, and are led away from all thought of ourselves.

We escape out of individual into universal life; we bathe in the healing waters of an illimitable ocean of vitality; we come into contact with a mighty organism which continually receives and as constantly gives out, in perfect unconsciousness of its functions. In health we hardly know that we have bodies; we breathe, move, and live without taking thought. Pain is physical self-consciousness, and when self-consciousness becomes a positive element in our lives it is an evidence of disease. A perfectly sane nature, perfectly adjusted to its time, its task, and its fellows, and expressing itself normally through normal activities, is free from abnormal self-consciousness, and therefore free to pour all its power into objective and creative work. For nothing limits normal growth and expression so inevitably as consciousness of self. In the diffusion of this morbid consciousness lies the explanation of the obvious limitation of so much genius, talent, and beauty which ought to have been large and free and sane. The talent of men like Leopardi and Verlaine commands the most generous recognition; but it is sheer blindness to accept such men as authoritative interpreters of life. Both were diseased; neither was sane in the real sense of the word, and neither saw life as it is, any more than the man in a fever, looking through the hospital window, sees Nature as she is. Byron, with the most powerful and spontaneous lyrical gift which has appeared in English literature since the days of the Elizabethans, could not escape from himself, and, when he attempted to deal with the problem of personality, painfully revealed his incapacity. Intensely self-conscious, he lost the power of seeing and reflecting life broadly and simply, and parted with that clearness and breadth of vision with which the really great poet must supplement the gift of song. Such a man, on the other hand, as we have reason to believe Shakspeare to have been, presents the entire surface of his mind to the world unvexed by a morbid sense of self, and reflects the whole order of things, as the still surface of the water gathers into itself the landscape and the sky. If for a single generation we could lose our abnormal self-consciousness and live simply, reverently, and actively, the whole race would be reinvigorated; we should see things as they are, and not as they appear in our distorted vision; for society is full of sick people who see themselves more distinctly than they see anything else, and we have been taking our reports and interpretations of life largely from sick men and women, forgetful of the fact that, however interesting such reports may be, and however artistic in form, as revelations and records they are absolutely worthless. The sane mind is the only mind that can authoritatively report or interpret the immense diversity and range of experience which we call life, because it is the only mind that can see life.

The secret of productive living lies in the preponderance of the unconscious over the conscious life; for we do not really possess an experience or a truth until these things have become so much a part of ourselves that we have ceased to think of them as distinct from ourselves. Feeling, experience, conviction, tradition, never find noble expression in art until they have sunk far below the conscious into the unconscious life of a man or a race; the artist has not gained complete freedom of expression until he has completely mastered the material in which he works and the instrument which he employs. So long as he is hampered by the consciousness of himself in dealing with them, he falls short of mastery. It is significant that the descriptions of childhood are often impressive and beautiful in books which deal very feebly and ineffectively with the experiences of maturity. The reason is obvious. Childhood lies so far back in our experience that it has become part of ourselves. We do not reproduce it by observation; we do not possess it because we have consciously studied it; it possesses us because it is part of our deepest selves. It lies there, as we look back upon it, in a light at once clear and soft, apart from our self-consciousness; a vision of that which we once were. Those mountains which so often appear in Titian's pictures were the hills which gathered about the home of his childhood, and became so much a part of his memory that his whole life seemed to be lived at their feet. To drain into ourselves the rivulets of power which flow through Nature, art, and experience, we must hold ourselves open on all sides; we must empty ourselves of ourselves in order to make room for the truth and power which come to us through knowledge and action; we must lose our abnormal self-consciousness in rich and free relations with the universal life around us; we must turn our conscious feeling, acting, and living into unconscious feeling, acting, and living. For the more a man can learn to do instinctively and unconsciously, the more complete will be his emancipation from the drudgery of living, and the more complete his freedom to develop his own personality.

XXIII

Solitude and Silence

THE sense of freedom which comes when one goes into the deep woods is something more than the satisfaction of a physical need; it is the satisfaction of a spiritual need, — the need of isolation, detachment, solitude. To the mind fatigued by constant and rapid readjustments to different subjects and to diverse tasks, the quiet and seclusion of the woods are like a healing balm. The pleasure they bring with them is so keen and so real that it is almost sensuous. One feels as if he had found himself after a long period of wandering; as if he had come to himself after a touch of delirium. The silence is sedative and the solitude a tonic; relaxation and reinvigoration are both at hand.

The instinct which impels us to get away from our fellows is as normal as that which constantly draws us to them; we cannot really live without them, we cannot really live with them! Here, as elsewhere, the highest growth involves the harmonization of two apparently opposing conditions, — the condition of isolation and that of association. These are the centrifugal and the centripetal forces which, in apparent opposition, work together for our complete development. The perfection of the citizen — the man in association with other men — depends first of all on the perfection of the individuality.

A man must be self-centred, self-sustained, and complete in himself before he can carry any real power or character into specific relationships; a tree must have independent rootage before it can take to itself the elements of life and growth about it. No man can give the highest impulses and thoughts to his fellows until he is, in a certain sense, independent of them; the visions of the prophet come in the desert or on the lonely summit of the hill. His duty is to his fellows; but much of the truth of which he is the mouthpiece is revealed to him when he is wrapped about with silence and solitude. That which is individual in us, and which makes us distinct and different from all other men, is fostered and developed by solitude. In society one is constantly assailed by influences, views, convictions, temperamental attitudes which are alien and often antagonistic. One needs the attrition of these differences; but one needs, first of all, something in himself which resists, — the power of a developed and self-conscious individuality.

In solitude a man learns what is in him; he makes terms with the power about him; he comes into intelligent relations with the world which surrounds him. Solitude is essential to real thinking, and it is only by thinking that we arrive at a knowledge of ourselves and at the significance of experience. After a day of intense activity, of deep emotion, of sudden or momentous happenings, one feels the necessity of being alone in order to get at the meaning of what has taken place. The very experiences which are

social in their character and which come to us only in company with our fellows are not completely ours until we have meditated upon them in some solitary place. It has often been said that a man is never so lonely as when in a crowd; for in a crowd it often happens that a man is not only unacquainted with those who press upon him on every side, but is also separated from himself by the confusion, noise, and pressure.

Individual gifts and qualities of all kinds are fostered by silence and solitude. Talent, Goethe tells us, is developed in solitude; but character, in the stream of the world. Before the metal can be tempered and hammered into shape, it must have individual quality; and it is this quality which a man carries with him into the world. A full life involves habitual meditation ; a continual play of the mind on all the elements and events which come within the range of vision.

It is significant that the faces of those who have interpreted life most fruitfully and nobly have the meditative cast; they bear the impress of secret thought. Men of executive force may dispense in a measure with privacy; but men of artistic or philosophical genius must guard it with jealous care. If they lose it, they part with something essential to their development. The happiest and most productive years in the life of a man of letters, or of an artist in any department, are often the years of obscurity; the long, leisurely years of silence and seclusion, beautiful with dreams and rich in the work which is play. When Fame comes, the crowd comes with her, and thenceforth the man must fight for the very life of his gift. In nothing is the public so remorseless as in the wasting of the time and substance of the man whom it elects to crown with popularity. It often destroys when it means to caress; it blights and saps when it means to nourish and reward. Fortunate is the man of artistic temper to whom fame comes so late that his habits are formed, his aims fixed, and his temper become as steel in its power of resistance!

Every man owes it to his soul to take time for solitude; to make place in his life for seclusion and silence. For the two are bound together, — one may be lonely in an uproar, but one can hardly find solitude under such conditions. In the woods the very sounds make the silence more evident and refreshing. The murmur of pines, the song of birds, the rustle and fall of leaves, the ripple of the brook, conspire to preserve the essential silence even while they seem to violate it. They are sounds so detached from the world of society, so free from all association with it, that they deepen our feeling of detachment from it; they do not interrupt and disturb; they soothe and harmonize. The quiet which reigns in the woods, so delicious to tired nerves and the spent mind, is not the repose of death, but the harmony of a fathomless life; it suggests, not effort and distraction, but ease and play; it is not so much absence of sound as harmony of sound. Life in human associations wearies us not because it is audible, but because it is inharmonious; because its sounds are not musical, but discordant. If they were musical they would fall on our ears like the chimes of Antwerp, which seem to rain pure melody from the clouds; they would bring with them peace and rest. It is because they are born of discord and of unnatural and unwholesome conditions that they disturb, irritate, and exhaust.

In the woods the sounds are normal, and they are, therefore, by contrast with the sounds of human making, akin to silence. They rest and refresh the nerves which discords have irritated and disturbed. When the nervous self-consciousness passes away with the passing of the conditions which developed it, and crowds are as remote as the roar they create, thought has a chance to play upon experience, to rationalize it, to study opportunities, to measure ability with task, to develop in one a clear, wholesome consciousness of self, and to adjust one intelligently to his environment. Through every fruitful life there must run a definite purpose and the habit of meditation; and these are possible only to the man who can separate himself from his fellows and think out his personal problem quietly, candidly, and fundamentally. When a man has justly measured himself and set himself to do the work which he is equipped to accomplish, his freshness and productivity will depend on the fulness and continuity of his meditation; the silent dwelling of the spirit on the deepest things of experience and knowledge.

XXIV

Unhasting, Unresting

THE unbroken continuity of the activity of Nature is both baffling and suggestive. The garment which the world wears is seamless, and therefore eludes our search for the secrets of mechanism and manufacture. The mystery and miracle of growth are behind it, and are still, after all our appliances and observation, inexplicable. Season succeeds season without pause, but by gradations so gradual that we are never able to mark the points of transition. We can say "It is summer" or "It is autumn;" we are never able to say "Here summer ends, here autumn begins." Invisibly and inaudibly the energy of life is put forth in verdure, leaf, bud, flower, and fruit; always witnessing its presence by a thousand tokens and signs, but never revealing the ways of its coming or the paths of its going. The beautiful procession has been moving across the fields and along the edges of the hills since time began; blossom and fragrance have silently revealed its presence; waving banners of red and gold have floated against the sky in golden autumnal days; fallen leaves have whirled along the path of its receding splendor; it has filled the eye with moving images and stirred the imagination with a thousand hints and impulses: but the secret of its endless variety, its fadeless pomp, the perennial freshness of its appeal through the senses to the soul, is inviolate.

We know that the moving principle behind it is vital, and that the method of its working out and putting forth is that of growth; but what life is in itself and how growth is accomplished we do not know. We have really large knowledge of the details of the manifestation of this wonderful force which streams through the universe, but of its nature we remain as ignorant as our fathers were. The commonest flower of the wayside is too wonderful for our intelligence.

The beauty of this spendid display of the resources of life in Nature lies largely in the unbroken continuity with which energy flows forth and functions and ends are fulfilled. The work never pauses, and yet it is never obtruded; it is always being accomplished with incredible expenditure of force, and yet there is never a sign of strain or exhaustion. The work of the natural world is not toil, but play; it is always going forward, and yet is absolutely free from haste and fret. Nature can produce a finished form in an hour, or she can spend a thousand years in the performance of a single task; in both cases she is equally exact, thorough, and adequate in selection of material and use of instruments; and she is also equally easeful, leisurely, and unhasting. She never rests and she never hastens; she is always at her task and she is always at her ease.

And in no aspect of her life is Nature more suggestive than in this fruitful repose, this energetic quietness, this masterful ease. We fret and worry and strain; we toil and groan and fall; she goes calmly on with her play of forces and tools, and accomplishes ends which not only lie beyond our strength, but beyond our comprehension. The conditions under which her work is carried on are so different from those under which ours is performed that we must forbear to press the analogy too far; but there remain certain resemblances which are neither forced nor misleading, and from these resemblances there flow certain teachings which are vitally important in the productive human life.

It is significant that the higher and more enduring the form of work is the closer the parallelism between the method of Nature and the method of man. The most barren, unreal, and useless form of human activity is the speculative, — which deals not with actual values, but with momentary impressions of values; and there is no other occupation which engenders such heat, fever, strain, and excitement. In no other public place, in no other recognized occupation, is man so undignified, irrational, and rudimentary in expression and action as in a stock exchange on a day of rapidly advancing or declining prices. At the other end of the long line of human activity stands the artist; the man who deals, not with the shifting estimations of things, but with their essential and enduring values, and whose work, beyond all other forms of work, is stamped by calmness and the fortitude of a long patience.

When, in any occupation, a man rises to the dignity and power of the artist, he achieves this rare distinction, this supreme success, by conforming his working habits to the methods of Nature. His work is full of vitality, freshness, individuality, by virtue of the complete identification of his spirit and his methods, and of the entire harmony which he has reached between his power and his task. He has healed the schism which so constantly separates the worker from his work, and which breeds self-consciousness and produces irritation, haste, and a feverish anxiety. His work is not accomplished on material outside of his own nature; it is accomplished through himself. If he is a writer he constantly uses literary forms, but that which he gives the world through the medium of those forms is a certain view of things which he alone of all men has taken or is able to take; and this view or interpretation of things is put forth not as a thing distinct from, but a part of, himself. If he is an orator he employs language, tones, modulation, gesture, posture, facial expressions which may be observed and described; but the charm of his speech lies in his personality, and it is that personality which captivates his auditors through all these media of utterance. In both these cases, and in the case of all men who attain mastery in any form of activity, the real work is accomplished within the nature of the man himself.

And this result is not secured by feverish intensity, by consuming haste; on the contrary, these are the things which postpone and defeat it. The fruit in the orchard ripens through long days and quiet nights; and the spirit of man must ripen under like conditions. It cannot be forced; agitation and haste keep it immature, unreceptive, and sterile.

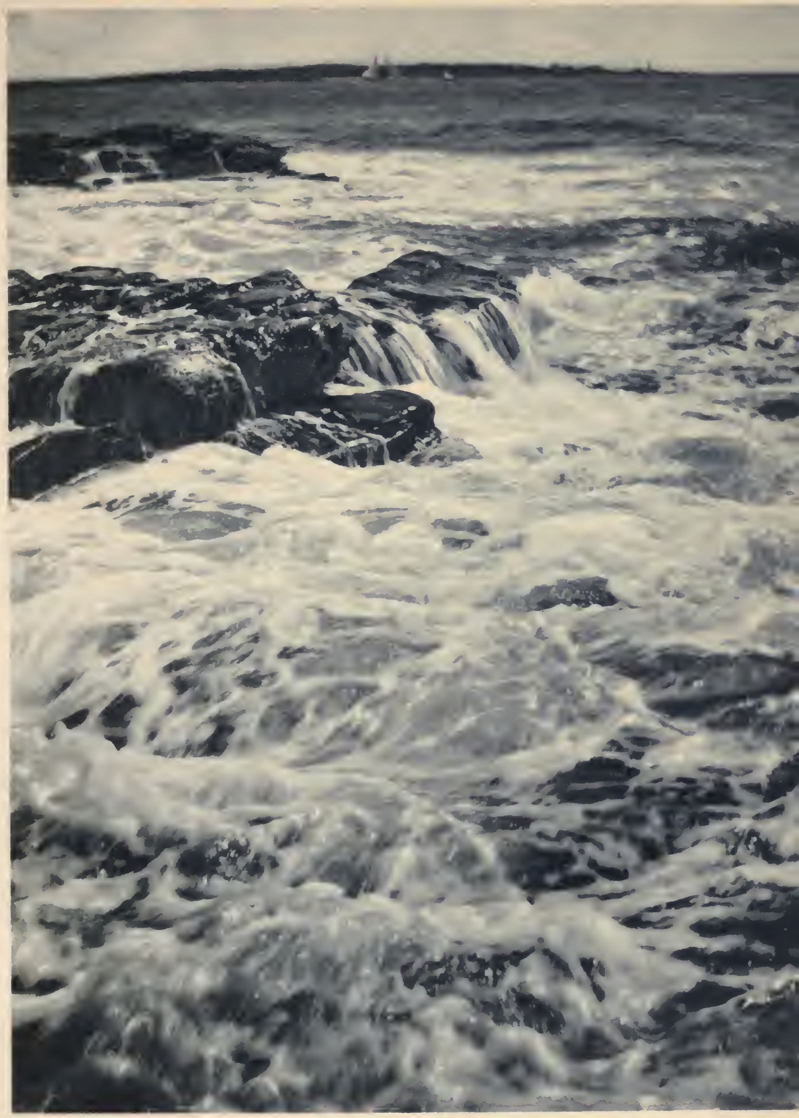
It is enriched and made powerful and productive by the habit of unhasting, unresting work. The man who has learned the secret of substituting growth for toil and of transforming work into play by making his work the normal and intimate expression of himself, never rests from his occupation. He is always at work. He is in a constant state of preparation, for he is always getting ready for the specific task by general enrichment. His hours of leisure are often more important than his hours of occupation, — so rich are they in the impressions and thoughts he is later to employ. A day in the woods often plants the seeds of half a dozen lyrics in a poet's soul; they ripen slowly or swiftly as the conditions determine: but putting them on paper, when the fit moment comes, is but the last step in a long series of stages each one of which marks the progression toward perfection. There has been, in this vital process, no moment of haste; and there has been no moment of rest: there has been a continuous, almost unconscious growth of a work of art in the invisible workshop of the artist's soul.

This appropriation of the vitalizing and enriching power of all knowledge, observation, and experience is the real work of the master workmen of the world; the embodiment of these rare and precious elements of power in new and original forms is necessary to the completion of the work, but is not its most difficult part. This habit of never resting and never hasting explains the fecundity of many of the great artists whose canvases line the walls of galleries or whose books fill the shelves of libraries. There is immense cumulative power in the industry which values all hours alike and turns them equally to account; and there is great power of health and freshness in freedom from the haste which disturbs, irritates, and exhausts. All moments are golden to him who uses them with equal wisdom; all leisure is fruitful to him whose nature ripens in the mellow calm of afternoon no less than in the stirring morning air. To be always receiving the teachings of experience and the vitality of Nature, and giving them back in one's habitual occupation, is to establish a true harmony between one's self and one's task, and, like Nature, to weave a seamless robe out of the diverse threads and stuffs which come to the invisible loom.

XXV

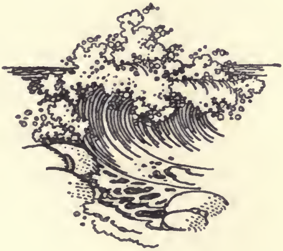
Health

IN the great writers we are impressed with a certain breadth and poise and sanity. They are simple, natural, direct; they deal with the universal experiences; their work has a certain elemental quality which allies it with Nature. There is nothing exclusive in their thought, esoteric in their methods, or unsocial in their temper. They are free from idiosyncrasies, oddities, eccentricities. They are genuinely original, but they never surprise us; they are profoundly true, but they never startle us with novelties. They produce



the most lasting impressions by the simplest means. Their skill is revealed, not in cunningly devised tricks of rhyme and turns of speech, but in an easy and winning familiarity with the resources of human experience and expression. Their workmanship is not artifice, but art, which is a very different matter. They fill us with an ample and tonic atmosphere; they give us the sweep of the horizon; clear skies and sweet earth and wholesome life glow over or arise about us whenever we open their pages. They are free from the cant of professionalism, from the dryness of the study, from the phraseology of the schools, from all kinds of morbid self-consciousness; they impress us as vigorous, wholesome men, dealing with normal things in a large, objective, healthy way. They represent a vitality raised above the average, not depressed below it; a knowledge of life gained by mastery of the conditions of natural living, not by violation of them; they give us the revelation which comes through superabundant health, not through debility and disease. These masters of the richest of the arts are not blind to the morbid and diseased conditions which exist among men; they are not indifferent to the hard and tragic fate which besets and baffles so many men and women; they are not oblivious of the sadness and pathos which gather about every career, however noble and effective, and enter into every experience. They are peculiarly sensitive to these dark and forbidding phases of the life of man in this mysterious world; these are, indeed, the very phases and aspects which touch their imagination most deeply and appeal most powerfully to their thought. The tragic side of experience is the material out of which much of the greatest literature is compounded; and in portraying the tragic hero and interpreting the tragic career the highest genius of the world has found its most absorbing and commanding task. Agamemnon, Œdipus, Lear, Faust, and Père Goriot are central figures in that world of the imagination with which the great writers have supplemented the world of reality. It is not difference of theme which separates as by a chasm the great sane masters of expression from the morbid and diseased interpreters of human life; it is clearness and sanity in dealing with these matters, — a true perspective, and a sound sense of proportion. A healthy man studies disease, comprehends and describes it as disease; a sick man treats it as normal. To the first, the world is wholesome and life is healthful, with a considerable percentage of disease preying upon its vitality and diminishing its strength; to the second, sickness of soul and body are universal and natural. To the first, Nature is sweet and sound and the world is sane, with here and there a hospital to blot the landscape; to the second, the universe is a vast sick-room, with occasional glimpses of blue sky through the windows. The plays of Æschylus and Shakspeare solemnize our thought and make us aware of the vast range of the elements which enter into the problem of life; but they affect us as Nature affects us, — with a sense of much hardness and of the presence of tragic forces, but also of a victorious vitality, an enormous reserve power of life. The plays of Maeterlinck, on the other hand, convey an impression of brooding and abnormal terror; a haunting sense of unseen and malignant powers; we are in a world which is smitten with unreality by reason of the preponderance and supremacy of evil. The Odyssey is a noble example of a sane and healthful book, full of vitality, change, stir, adventure; ful also of calamity, mischance, hardship, and suffering. But in the story, as in life seen with any breadth of view, the miseries and misfortunes are immensely overbalanced by vitality and endurance. Ulysses has his moments of discouragement, but he is superior to his fate. The charm of the story lies in its elemental breadth, simplicity and sanity. Its whole movement is out of doors; the sting of the brine is in it, but so also is the wild free breath of the sea; the roar of the surf on the rocks thunders through it, but there is also the clear sky and the shining stars. One feels that he is in a hard world, but it is a real world, — not a hospital, a mad-house, or a place of fantastic dreams.

It is a deep and sound instinct which leads the man who has lost his health back to Nature. A great mass of sickness yields speedily to her silent ministrations. There is no medicine so potent as the sweet breath and the sweeter seclusion of the woods; there is no tonic like a free life under the open sky. Insanity goes out of one's blood when the song of the pines is in one's ears and the rustle of leaves under one's feet. In the silence of the wood health waits like an invisible goddess, swift to divide her stores with every one who has faith enough to come to the shrine. And upon health in the fundamental sense depends the power of seeing clearly, of feeling freshly, and of producing continuously. For health means harmony of life with the fundamental laws; the accord between man and Nature which keeps him in touch with the sources of power. The man who is smitten with disease in mind or character often creates beautiful things; but his production is sporadic and limited. He is out of relation with the vital forces; out of sympathy with the life of men in its deeper and nobler aspects. It is at this point and for this reason that great art and fundamental morals are bound together in indissoluble bonds. The universe is not an accident, and man's life in it is not a matter of chance. The world and man are under the rule of certain laws which are not arbitrarily imposed by a superior power, but which are wrought into the very fibre of things. The artist who persistently violates those laws is not breaking a series of conventional rules; he is violating his own nature, severing the vital ties which unite him to his fellows, filling up the channels through which power flows to him, and steadily diminishing his creative and productive energy. When disease assails the body, it invariably diminishes the working force in some direction; when it fastens upon the character, it saps the strength which is essential to long-sustained and heroic tasks. A man cannot do the work of Dante, Michael Angelo, or Shakspeare if he lacks a clear head, a vigorous will, or a steady hand. Moral sanity, health of soul, lie at the foundation of a great career in the higher fields of activity. To bear the fruits of life year after year, as the trees bear their fruits and the fields their grain, one must have that divine health which Nature distils in the woods or in the air of the great seas.



XXVI

Work and Play

NOTHING in natural processes is more suggestive than the apparent ease with which the greatest power is put forth and the most diverse and difficult tasks accomplished. Nature never rests, and yet is always in repose; she never ceases to work, and yet always appears to be at play. The expenditure of power involved in the change from winter to summer is incalculable; but the change is accomplished so quietly and by such delicate gradations that it is impossible to associate the idea of toil with it. There is no strenuous putting forth of force;

there is rather the overflow of a fathomless life. The tide of life runs to the summit of the remotest mountain which nourishes a bit of verdure as easily as the water sweeps in from the sea when the tide turns and the creeks and inlets begin to sing once more in the music of returning waves. The secret of this silent, invisible, easy play of force and accomplishment of ends lies perhaps in perfect adaptation of instrument to task, in absence of friction, in complete harmony between power, methods, and ultimate aims. The entire harmony which characterizes Nature in her unconsciousness is not possible to man in his consciousness ; but the conditions under which the life of Nature manifests itself and bears its manifold fruits is rich in hints and suggestions. At no point is the analogy between that life, in certain of its aspects, and the life of man more striking and helpful.

The secret of heroic work is harmony between the man and his task; an adjustment so complete that the putting forth of strength in a specific direction becomes as natural and instinctive as breathing or walking. So long as we toil, we are slaves, and the labor of the slave is always stamped with a certain inferiority. Toil involves drudgery, and is mechanical and perfunctory; it is devoid of personality, beauty, or power; it implies a dominating force accomplishing its ends by sheer authority, not a free human spirit giving its vitality full play. When toil becomes work, drudgery gives place to a conscientious and often cheerful expenditure of power and surrender of ease. The worker is free, and puts his heart and soul into his work with the joy of one who serves his own high aims rather than bends unwillingly to an authority stronger than his own personality. In its subordination of the minor to the major motives of living, its quiet substitution of the lower for the higher pleasures, its discipline, and its self-sacrifice, work, instead of being the traditional curse of the race, is its blessing, its happiness, and its reward. The heroic workers of the world are the men whose tasks and achievements are most enviable; they are lifted above themselves by absorption in great undertakings; they are engrossed in occupations which not only ease the pain of living by steadily calling forth the highest in the worker, but which educate, liberate, and enrich even while they exhaust. The strain of Herculean work is often hard to bear, but the man who feels it has the consciousness that he is doing a man's task in the brief day of life and earning a man's reward.

As work is higher toil, so is play higher than work. Toil rests upon submission, work on freedom, play on spontaneity and self-unconsciousness. When toil becomes free, it is transformed into work; and when work becomes spontaneous and instinctive it is transformed into play. The toiler is a slave, the worker a freeman, the man who plays an artist. When work rises into the sphere of creativeness, takes on new forms, breathes the vital spirit, becomes distinctive and individual, it is transformed into art. It is no longer accomplished under the law of necessity; it has become free. It is no longer full of strain and pain; it is joyful. It is no longer the strenuous putting forth of power; it is the natural overflow of a rich and powerful nature. It is no longer a means to something apart from and beyond itself; it is a joy and satisfaction in itself. The drudgery of apprenticeship gives place to the independence and inventiveness of mastery; the slavery to time and place, to model and method, is succeeded by the freedom of art. To turn work into play is, therefore, the highest achievement of active life; and to rise, in any department of work, from apprenticeship and artisanship to the ease and freedom of the artist, is to attain the most genuine and satisfying success which a life of activity offers.

Play is not free from fatigue, but it is free from friction, irritation, repression. It is in no sense indolent or easeful; on the contrary it involves the most prodigal expenditure of strength. In games of competitive endurance a boy counts no putting forth of strength too severe, no subsequent fatigue too great; the more exacting the test the deeper the satisfaction of sustaining it. The pleasure of play is not absence of effort, but the consciousness of freedom; not escape from weariness, but the feeling that one has put himself into the great game of life masterfully. When work becomes play it does not cease to be exhausting, but the weariness which comes with it is normal; it does not cease to impose severe conditions on the worker, but these conditions are joyfully, instead of reluctantly, accepted. The man who turns work into play, instead of being slothful, becomes notable by reason of the ardor and prodigality with which he pours himself out upon his tasks. For when the joy of working takes possession of a man, he ceases to take account of times and days and places; he is always at work, for work is to him the normal form of activity. A full nature, putting itself forth with ease and power, and expressing that which is distinctive and individual in it in the work of mind and hand, — this is what the worker becomes when he is transformed into the artist. He not only loves his task, — the man in the working stage often loves his work, — but he individualizes it, handles it freely, freshly, originally. He makes his own times, develops his own methods, fashions his own tools. He deals with his material as if he had created it. He does not work by rule, but by instinct and reason; he does not imitate, he creates; he does not accept conventional styles and aims, he forms his own style and determines the ends to which he moves. The work which he does with his hands is not a thing outside of his consciousness and apart from his experience; it is a part of himself, for it is the expression of his own soul. It is his personal word to the world; his revelation of the order of things as he sees it; his symbol of the beauty and power and terror of life. Goethe said that his works, taken together, constituted one great confession; and this is true of the works of all creative men. What they leave behind in language, picture, or stone is a part of themselves; the expression of the immortal part. In the work of such a man as Rembrandt, for instance, one feels the presence not so much of skill and talent as of a tremendous personal force; the artist is hardly veiled by the art; magnificent as the achievement is, it hints at a power behind it of which it is a very imperfect revelation. The tragedy of King Lear affects us in the same way: it is colossal in itself, but the imagination cannot rest within the limits of the play; it knows instinctively that it is in the presence of a creative energy more commanding than the majestic drama which it has fashioned.

XXVII

Work and Beauty

FEW events in the spiritual life of the last two centuries have been more striking or richer in educational results than that rediscovery of Nature to the imagination and the æsthetic sense, the record of which, so far as English literature is concerned, is to be found between the letters of Gray and the verse of Whitman. A very large part of the natural world was alien, repellent, inimical to mediæval men and to their successors far on into the modern period. The solitude of deep woods, the lonely heights of the great hills, the wildness of vast

moors, the rock-strewn shore of the sea, which appeal so powerfully to the modern imagination, were full of repulsion and terror to an imagination largely uneducated in this direction. From the days of Petrarch to those of Ruskin the knowledge of Nature has not been widened more radically than has the love of Nature and the ability to understand and appreciate the Protean aspects through which her elusive but pervasive beauty reveals itself. We seek what our ancestors shunned, we love what they disliked, we are overwhelmed with beauty where they were oppressed with desolation and ugliness.

The Alps refresh and lift us above ourselves ; the cliffs against which the sea dashes along the coast of Norway draw us from the ends of the earth ; the Scotch highlands fill us with fresh life, and beguile us out of conventions into freedom and joy. To the men of the beginning of the last century these sublime aspects of the world were full of terror and repulsion.

This extraordinary extension of human interest in and affection for Nature suggests that the standard of beauty is in her rather than in us, and that the training of the æsthetic sense and of the imagination so constantly extends the reign of beauty throughout Nature as to afford ground for believing that that reign is universal, and that when we fail to detect beauty in any aspect or form of natural life our perceptive powers are at fault. For Nature is saturated with beauty. It flows from her central life as truly as it discloses itself in her most delicate forms; it is wrought into her very structure; it is not decorative merely, it is organic; it not only plays on the surface, it is diffused throughout her whole being. It is everywhere identical with life and at one with power.

This universal beauty, which shines in the stars, and blooms in the flowers, and builds in the woods cathedral aisles of pillared trunk and arching branch, lies largely in the perfect workmanship which secures symmetry, enforces subordination of the parts to the whole, holds the elements of vitality and form in perfect balance, and exacts implicit obedience to the law of the type. When Nature has finished her work on any particular form she has stamped it with some kind of beauty. We may not discern it at the moment, as our ancestors so often failed to see beauty where we see it at a glance; but it is there if we have the intelligence to discover it. For nothing is really finished until it is beautiful, and beauty is the final form toward which Nature constantly strives. She is entirely indifferent as to the quality of the material upon which she works; she knows no distinctions or degrees; everything is alike common and precious to her. The rarest flower that blooms is touched with a loveliness so delicate that it seems almost spiritual; but the ferns, which fairly wall in the rough, wild-wood roads, are not less exquisitely shaped and moulded. Out of the mist and the light the glory of sunset strikes across the world, and the hearts of men are awed and purified as if they had looked through the gates of Paradise.

It is clear that beauty is neither incidental nor decorative in Nature; it is structural and organic. It marks the end of the creative process in every direction, and it reveals the final form. In like manner it must enter into the activity of men; for it is not a charm which a man's work may possess or reject; it is essential to the wholeness and completeness of that work. Until he commands it his work is provisional and preparatory. It may be noble and useful, but it cannot be final and enduring. The fruits of toil are rarely beautiful; they are sweet and sound, but they are rudimentary. The products of work are often, though not necessarily, beautiful; but when work is transformed into play by becoming spontaneous, free, joyous, and individual, it rises at once into the world of the beautiful. Its product is no longer a piece of drudgery, it is a piece of art; its maker is no longer an artisan, he is an artist. There is always at hand, therefore, a test of the quality of that which a man produces, a standard measure of his success, a method of determining how far he has gone in that full and free development of himself in which the individual life finds its consummation. It must be constantly borne in mind that to be an artist in one's treatment and use of life it is not necessary that one should deal with any particular kind of material; for distinction does not inhere in material, but in treatment. A man may use the finest marble with the mechanical and slavish dexterity of an artisan, or he may carve the end of a half-burnt fagot with the spirit and force of an artist, as did Gasparo Becerra. The quality of art resides in the man, not in the substance upon which he works. In every occupation there are, therefore, all the stages which separate perfection from crudity, finality of form from rudimentary beginning; and real success lies in securing that mastery which enables a man to do his work with freshness, freedom, and power; to stamp it with individuality by making it the full and powerful expression of his own nature.

Now, this mastery is not secured in any field of activity until beauty stamps the accomplished work and characterizes the manner in which it is done. In so far as work falls short of beauty it falls short of perfection. Slovenliness, crudity, indifference to finish of detail and soundness of workmanship, furnish infallible evidence that the man behind the work is still an apprentice; he has not come to maturity of insight and effectiveness. These defects show lack of conscience, lowness of aim, or defect in that training which every man ought to impose upon himself as a duty to himself. It is immoral to do clumsily that which we ought to do skilfully, to do carelessly that which ought to be done with consummate patience, to be satisfied with ugliness when beauty is within reach. Our natures never fully express themselves so long as the language they employ is limited in vocabulary and imperfect in grammar. The artist fails to convey his vision to us so long as the resources of his craft are partially beyond his grasp; the pianist cannot move us until the instrument is so thoroughly mastered that it responds to his touch as if it were but an extension of his own organs of expression. In like manner the full and free utterance of a man's deepest self is hindered, baffled, and limited in the exact degree in which he has neglected or failed to master the materials in which, and the tools with which, he works. Crudity which persists is evidence either of defect of quality in the workman or of lack of conscience in his work; for the degree of thoroughness of workmanship is the real test of morality in the worker. The man of conscience must reach the stage of beauty as certainly as the man of artistic quality, unless Nature fails to reinforce his effort with innate capacity. In the degree, therefore, in which a man fails to stamp his work with beauty he fails in loyalty to himself and in that real and enduring success which is as much a matter of duty as of opportunity. To become an artist in this sense is not the privilege of the elect few; it is the duty of the many. To fall short of it is to fail to produce the fruit which the tree was appointed to bear.

XXVIII

The Rhythmic Movement

THE poets felt the rhythmic element in Nature in those far-off beginnings of time when the myth-makers told their stories. The flow of rivers, the procession of stars, the antiphony of day and night, the silent but inviolate order of the seasons, made the earliest men of observation and imagination aware of a rhythm to which all natural movements were set. Every kind of action betrays a melodic tendency, and there are days when one seems to hear the whole world, — become audible, like some great epic poem recited by winds and seas. The tinkle of the mountain brook, sounding all manner of clear, fresh notes, sings in the ear that has learned to distinguish the different tones and has become familiar with a gamut of sounds wholly alien from human vocalization or mechanism and yet full of a penetrating melodic quality. To one who has listened attentively to the tones of different kinds of trees, the play of winds upon the leaves has a harmonic effect, — one note supplied by the pine, another by the oak, and still another by the elm. On a warm afternoon the stirring of the pine's boughs is like the gentle breathing of the summer day; as if the drowsy earth had fallen asleep and gave no sound save quiet breathing. The sea also has its music; a magic music which has called men away from ease and safety and set them adrift with wind and tide since time began; sometimes a siren song luring them to destruction, sometimes that heroic music to which great adventures and splendid discoveries are set.

The activities of men working together with Nature betray the same rhythmic tendency; as if Nature drew into the vast flow of things all lesser works and sounds. The sailors sing at their tasks by an instinct which feels, even when it does not understand, the steady pulsations of labor; and the cries and shouts and traditionary "yo-he-yo" on a ship that is being loaded bring with them all manner of reminiscences and hints of the sea; one seems to hear, in mimic tones, the singing of the spars, the crack of the sail suddenly catching the breeze, the wild, free roar and rush of the waves swept on by wind with which they are in unison. And on clear nights, far inland, one can recall the rhythmic movement of the spars against the illimitable sky, and the vast, mysterious swell of the ocean, like the unconscious respiration of the earth itself.

In like order, too, the hammers rang on the ship when keel and frame were put together in the ship-yard. And still farther back, the strokes of axes felling the trees were also set in some harmonic tune. On an October day, the ring of the axe at a distance in the woods sends out not only an inspiring note of health, power, and successful work, but there is a real music in the recurrent strokes. So, too, the swing of the scythe or the cradle distil a harmony of movement and sound which makes a harvest field the oldest acted poem known among men ; there are few places where men seem so much a part of Nature, few tasks which seem to give them such real and genuine dignity. The sounds of flails falling on the grain spread on the floor of the barn beat like a great rhyme.

Wherever energy is put forth in any kind of work with Nature the rhythmic quality, shared alike by the worker and the world which enfolds him, is revealed. The man who fells the oak with swift and steady stroke is conforming to a universal law when he puts regular intervals between the successive blows of the axe ; he is unconsciously working in harmony with his own constitution and with the constitution of Nature. In the ground under his feet and in the woods which surround him, life moves in steady although inaudible pulsations. The vital currents recede and return with a regularity which is never varied; the very leaves on the trees find their places in an order which science has detected; the stars overhead return to their places with such exactness of movement that their position at any hour in the farthest future can be accurately determined. The tides come flooding up the bays and creeks with a regularity which twice a day, in ebb and flow, sings the song of the sea along the shores of every continent and island. The very clouds, so accidental and casual in appearance and disappearance, so dependent on varying and changing conditions, form and dissolve in an inviolable order which we are not

yet intelligent enough to discover. And the storms, which seem to make the discords in the universal harmony and to keep chance, chaos, and confusion potent in an ordered universe, are now known to gather and disperse under a law of movement as fixed and harmonic as that which governs the tides.

This rhythmic quality in Nature, this flowing movement which embraces all material things and expresses itself through all life, becomes more evident and more significant with each advance of science. The more penetrating the gaze of science becomes, the more immaterial and mysterious become the structure of the earth and the forces which play through it. What once seemed fixed and stationary is now seen to be free and flowing; matter more and more resolves itself into force; and force becomes more and more subtle, pervasive, and immaterial. And the more profoundly these forces are studied, the more distinctly does their substantial identity appear; all forces tending to resolve into one force, of which all the different kinds of force are so many diverse but kindred forms of manifestation. So delicate and sensitive is this force, — as revealed, for example, in electricity, — that the solid earth seems, in the long perspective through which science sees all created things, immaterial and spiritual, responding to the lightest breath of motion, affected at vast distances by the least change of time or order. This flowing stream of force in which the material world has been resolved hints at a harmonious movement, which is not only a law of its own being, but which is also a condition of all growth and life. The electrical motor, twenty miles distant from the generator, does not receive the full charge of power until its movement is synchronous with that of the generator ; when the two are in exact harmony, power flows in full tide from the source to the instrument. The law which governs the transmission of light, of heat, of sound, of power of all kinds, hints at the same deep and significant quality of rhythm throughout the universe, andat the truth which flows from it, — that to move with it is to be part of the fathomless movement of life which the universe reveals and illustrates.

XXIX

The Law of Harmony

THIS marvellous truth concerning the structure of the world, divined by the poets and demonstrated by the scientists, is fundamental in the life of man, embosomed in Nature, and allied to her in ways many and mysterious. The law of rhythm is illustrated in the individual and collective life of men so clearly that history might be rewritten from this standpoint. All the unconscious physical functions, in health, are rhythmical: the beating of the heart, the respiration, the circulation of the blood. The conscious physical functions and activities tend to develop the same regular order and sequence, the same harmonic quality. The body adapts itself swiftly to fixed hours of exercise, of eating, and of sleep, and the physical expectation is so keen and firmly grounded that any change or violation of this order, once established, produces physical disturbance. And the physical habits are vitally related to the whole nature; they become in the highest degree expressive of physical and moral character. A man's walk is unconsciously rhythmical; his gestures, inflections, tones, sentences, partake of the harmonic quality, which is determined by his very structure. If he is a man of force, order, and productiveness, his intellectual life shares in this harmonic movement, which begins in the physical and culminates in the spiritual sphere.

He forms habits of thought which tend to become orderly and fruitful; he discovers the hours when his nature is most responsive and suggestive, and husbands them; he learns his own rhythm and consciously conforms to it for the sake of the immensely increased freedom and power which flow from harmonic obedience. He develops his own method and style, for he learns that these apparently external things are really the breathings of his own deepest life. This mysterious unity of a man's nature, this vital connection between what the man is and what he does, comes to light the moment we study any department of human expression. Metre, for instance, finds its physiological basis in respiration, and is determined largely by this physical action. The metre of

"Hiawatha," which reads so easily that it seems to flow from the lips, owes this ease to its exact measurement of the expulsion of the air from the lungs. So nicely is it adjusted to the physical act of breathing that one can recite lines which conform to it almost as easily as one can breathe; a fact which explains its ancient popularity among makers and reciters of epic verse. Its flow makes it, also, the easy conquest of the memory.

This illustration hints at the secret of the singular individualism of style, which, in the case of great writers, is as personal as the contour of the face or its coloring. Most men have phrases and forms of expression which tend to recur; but they have no style, — no individual construction of sentences and choice of words. Style is harmonic; it has order, sequence, flow;

it is vitally expressive of the nature of the man who uses it. If he is a great writer, it is flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone. It is the confluence of his physical, intellectual, and spiritual forces; it is the fusion of all his qualities; it is his rhythm.

We instinctively feel the possession of the rhythmic quality in a speaker. For the man who finds his rhythm and surrenders himself to it, expresses himself with an ease, freedom, beauty, and charm which set us at rest with the first sentence, and cast a spell of a subtle enchantment over us; the enchantment of that harmonious relation to one's time, task, materials, and self in which a fresh note always sounds. The instinct for harmony in every listener bears witness to its presence in the delight with which such a speaker is heard. We are won for a time out of all thought of ourselves, out of all antagonism, out of all care and sorrow, by the vibration of a single note of that deep harmony which pervades the universe.

In this illustration lies the secret of the charm of art, and the secret also of individual power and productiveness. Nature is not simply harmonious in appearance; she is a unit to the very heart of her structure; and all the forces which play through her are rhythmic and harmonic. The signs are manifold that we are standing on the threshold of a new conception of the material world and of unsuspected possibilities of relationship to it. The vast order of things which surrounds us is not dead matter; it is flowing force; and force of a quality so high and sensitive that it presses fast on that which we have hitherto called spiritual. That force affects us in numberless and mysterious ways; our bodies are in subtle communion and fellowship with Nature; our minds are constantly assailed by influences of which we have hitherto taken no note. If sounds can be transmitted through water and through earth, not by tangible wires but by intangible vibrations, the interdependence of all forms of life as well as of forms of force must be far more complex and sensitive than we have suspected, and the relation of man to his world far more intimate. Every new step in this direction makes it more clear that susceptibility to delicate influence, responsiveness to universal movements, and quality and receptivity to power depend on the harmonious relations of the part with the whole. Distance seems to be annihilated when movements are synchronous; power does not travel from point to point; it pervades all things at the same moment, and fills all that are open to its incoming. Clearly here are sources of vitality which are not only inexhaustible, but with which we are only beginning to put ourselves in true relations. It is not an idle fancy that the race has before it enlargements of its life and a widening of its interests of almost unsuspected range and importance. The old fable of Antæus may read like a sublime prophecy two centuries hence.

For the Power which sustains Nature is the same power which sustains men; it is unlimited and illimitable. The vastness and glory of its manifestations in the material universe are but inadequate symbols of its possible manifestations through a humanity as obedient to its laws as is Nature. The man who violates the laws of his nature separates himself from the source of life and power, and diminishes into the insulation of sterile individuality; the man who lives in harmony with that Power, with Nature, and with himself, receives the full tide of vitality which flows without limit or pause from the creative source. He is fed by invisible rivulets, he is nourished by unseen ministrants; health, sanity, fertility, and joy are his by the very constitution of Nature. There has been but one life, so far, lived among men which has been in perfect harmony with the laws of life and in constant contact with the sources of vitality. In that life Nature worked as a co-operative force; language was as simple, as beautiful, and as final as the stars and winds, the flowers and harvest, which furnished it with the deepest and richest illustration; thought bore the cumulative fruit of truth; conduct rose to the level of aim; and power flowed from it with immortal fulness. As time reveals its essential unity with the divine order, its beauty, its simplicity, its health, and its immeasurable range become more and more clear. It is not only the divinest life known to us; it is also the sanest and the most natural. It interprets Nature as no other life interprets her, because Nature and this transcendent Life obeyed the same laws and moved to the same ends.

XXX

The Prophecy of Nature

IF these brief chapters have conveyed even a faint impression of the duration, the intimacy, and the importance of the relations between Nature and men, they have made it clear that those relations are not only the oldest recorded facts in the history of the race, but that they are also cumulative in their influence and prophetic in their character. The race life and the individual life have alike received the deepest education through these relationships, which have become, as time has passed, more intimate, complex, and mysterious; phenomena have come more

and more within the range of intelligence, law has made itself increasingly clear and controlling to the investigating mind; and force has yielded its secrets with growing frankness and made itself a willing servant. And this whole revelation of Nature, carrying with it the education of the race, has steadily risen in quality and significance from what we have hitherto called the material to what we have called the spiritual; two words which our ignorance has set in apposition, but which really describe different aspects of the one indivisible life which flows through all forms. Nature is no longer an orderly succession of phenomena alone; she is also a symbol of man's life; she is no longer a material appearance, she is also a spiritual reality; she is no longer the shell from which the fully developed man has broken away, she is also a sublime prophecy of the unbroken and uninterrupted life.

An educational process is prophetic in its very nature; it is always and everywhere a preparation; it implies incomplete development; it involves the possibility of growth; it assumes time, capacity, opportunity, material for work. The school, the college, and the university not only affirm the need of training and the capacity to receive it, but also the opportunity to use it. The art school is conclusive evidence of the existence of the artist and the practice of the art. And not only does the educational process affirm its reality as a thing of supreme importance; it also affords a measure of the dignity and magnitude of the work for which it prepares. An occupation which involves rudimentary manual skill requires a brief and superficial training; but the masterly practice of a great art necessitates long continued and exhaustive training. The more difficult the work to be done, the more exacting and fundamental the education required.

Now, no one can study carefully the education which men have received from intercourse with Nature without a deepening sense of its rigor, its complexity, and its penetrating power. It has searched the race through and through; tested its strength; exacted its obedience; tried it by suffering, self-denial, and death; made inexorable demands on its patience, fidelity, intelligence, and character. As the race has measurably received this training the standards have been steadily raised; as intellectual and moral fibres have toughened the tests have steadily become more searching; a stage of development gained does not mean rest, but further advance. The educational process is not only unending, but it constantly grows more severe. Nature is clearly treating the race as if it were immortal, and training the individual as if he were imperishable. This marvellous educational process, steadily advancing in complexity and spirituality as men grow in knowledge, does not even give us pause to calculate its rate of movement or to record its results. It is indifferent as to present achievement; it resistlessly presses toward the future, — every new skill detecting at once a new opportunity; every new fact bringing with it the prediction of some other fact; every summit gained opening a wider horizon of work and achievement. In the very heart of this fathomless and measureless training lies the affirmation of the immortality of the nature that is trained; in the complexity and severity of this inexorable education lies the affirmation of the duration and the dignity of the work and the life for which it prepares.

As this process of training becomes more distinct and definite it also becomes more clear that there is in every man a capacity for receiving education which is practically without limits either as to time or range. One stage of training succeeds to another without pause; and no sooner is skill secured in one direction than it begins to effect results in other and unforeseen directions. The hand that holds a tool is part of an organism which constantly affects it and upon which it as constantly reacts. As that hand is held to its task, the eye, the will, the nature of the man behind it are all involved in its work. Aims are slowly modified, the spirit which goes into the work deepens and is often entirely changed, the soul of the worker merges more and more with his skill, until the work becomes an expression of his soul. Beginning with mere manual dexterity, put forth for material rewards, the worker becomes more interested, more intelligent, more artistic; conscience presides over his task; the imagination is awakened, and the man is transformed by degrees from the artisan to the artist. His skill has become spontaneous, his aims have become spiritual. He is no longer satisfied with wages of money; he demands wages of life as well, — growth, freedom, power, influence.

Thus the educational process goes on in the individual; and the further it is carried the more distant seems the end. Advance in skill and power does not mean pause or satisfaction; it means clearer vision of higher things still to be attained, deeper discontent with present achievement, an expansion of intelligence and heart which nothing within the range of the education of this present life can satisfy. In the nature of man, as in Nature herself, there is a vast movement set toward finer skills and higher attainments, without provision for arrest of activity, without recognition of finalities of equipment, without signs of the limit of the movement or of the ebb of the tide which carries it forward. That unfolding of all the possibilities of the human spirit which is accomplished by growth and which is best described by the word culture has been carried far in the history of the race and in that of many individuals, but it has never yet been completed ; on the contrary, the further it is carried, the richer its possibilities become. The life we now live is primarily and in its essence an educational process ; and whatever enlargement, deliverance, and beauty come to us in any other life must be through larger opportunity, freer play of power, and flawless achievement. No man who has really looked into life can imagine a heaven which is not, in some form, harmonious and perennial growth.

This element of prophecy is not only present in the educational process which Nature provides for men; it is also written on her own organization and movement. The great conception of development has not only introduced a new idea of order, progression, and intelligibility in our thought of the world about us; it has also vitalized that world, spiritualized it, and discovered the direction of its movement. When the universe was a mass of matter in the old material sense of the word, — a mass of dirt, — made up of parts of which the mutual relations were not apparent; distinct from man and unrelated, save by antagonism, to his life and growth, — it was rational to doubt its spiritual significance and to question its educational value. But the conception of the unity and interdependence of all created things, of their gradual advance from the germ to the perfected organism, of the vast unfolding of all things through the deepest and most vital relationships, of the rise of type above type in an ascending gradation, of the constant reaction of the individual upon his surroundings and of the general conditions upon the individual, of the dependence of man upon Nature and of the interpretation of Nature by man; in a word, of the measureless and fathomless movement which has clothed the universe with beauty as with a garment, made man master of himself by unfolding his nature through knowledge, skill, character, set him in living relations to a living universe, — this conception carries with it the knowledge that man and Nature are not in antagonism, that matter and spirit are not in apposition, that mortal and immortal are not contrasting words, that time and eternity are not different. There is one all-inclusive order which includes man as completely as it includes his world; there is one sublime force, of which all forces are manifestations, which flows through all things and by which all things are sustained; there is one inclusive movement, the record of which lies plainly written in the history of man and of Nature; it has never paused, it will never pause, and its direction is from the lower to the higher, from the material to the spiritual; there is one inexhaustible life, which floods the universe with vitality and makes it a living order, and which forever renews man by forever unfolding him in intelligence and power. To comprehend that order and ally himself with it, to recognize that life and hold himself open to it, — this is the philosophy of sound, deep, productive living.

This is the spiritual significance of man and Nature under a law of development. Progression binds them together in divine fellowship and lifts their relationship from plane to plane in an endless ascension; immortal growth is the prophecy which Nature makes for man.